















# ALONG THE OLD ROAD

BY

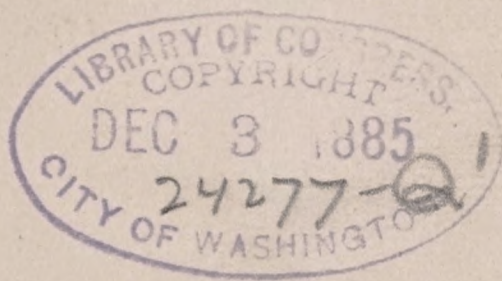
MARY HUBBARD HOWELL

AUTHOR OF "THROUGH THE WINTER," "ON THE WAY HOME," "IN  
AFTER YEARS," ETC.

---

"We will go by the king's *high* way: we will not turn to the right  
hand nor to the left."—*Bible*.

---



PHILADELPHIA:  
THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,  
1122 CHESTNUT STREET.

(*All rights reserved.*)

1885



PZ3  
H8395A  
88

---

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1885, by  
THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,  
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

---

JAS. B. RODGERS PRINTING Co.,  
52 and 54 N. Sixth Street,  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.



# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
THE ROAD CHOSEN . . . . .	9

## CHAPTER II.

IN THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND . . . . .	28
------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III.

OUT OF THE WAY . . . . .	47
--------------------------	----

## CHAPTER IV.

FENCED IN . . . . .	65
---------------------	----

## CHAPTER V.

THE BURDEN DROPPED . . . . .	81
------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VI.

THE SPRING AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL . . . . .	98
--	----

## CHAPTER VII.

CLIMBING HILL DIFFICULTY . . . . .	128
------------------------------------	-----



## CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
IN THE ARBOR ON THE HILL-SIDE . . . . .	154

## CHAPTER IX.

IN THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL . . . . .	178
----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER X.

THE TWO LIONS . . . . .	195
-------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XI.

THE PORTER'S DIRECTIONS . . . . .	212
-----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

IN THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION . . . . .	231
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

HEALING LEAVES . . . . .	246
--------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH . .	260
---	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

IN VANITY FAIR . . . . .	271
--------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE PLAIN CALLED EASE . . . . .	285
------------------------------------	-----



*CONTENTS.*

vii

CHAPTER XVII.

	PAGE
BY THE HILL CALLED LUCRE . . . . .	296

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUT OF CASTLE DOUBTING . . . . .	311
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE CHAMBER OF PEACE . . . . .	329
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XX.

STILL ALONG THE HIGHWAY . . . . .	337
-----------------------------------	-----



“Go tell them also of those dainty things  
That Pilgrimage unto the Pilgrim brings.  
Let them acquainted be, too, how they are  
Beloved of their King, under his care ;  
What goodly mansions he for them provides,  
Though they meet with rough winds and swelling tides ;  
How brave a calm they will enjoy at last,  
Who to their Lord, and by his ways hold fast.”

—*Pilgrim's Progress.*



# ALONG THE OLD ROAD.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### THE ROAD CHOSEN.

“Is this the way to the Celestial City?”

You are just in your way.

How far is it thither?

Too far for any but those who shall get thither indeed.”

—*Pilgrim's Progress.*

IT was a warm, sunshiny, Sabbath afternoon in the month of July. In a large boarding-house in Quantuck, a well-known summer resort on the Atlantic coast, dinner was just over, and the spacious parlors and broad piazzas were thronged with men, women and children laboriously engaged in doing—nothing. A confused sound of voices talking and babies crying, of omnibuses rolling through the street on the way to the beach, and of untrained fingers thrumming on the piano, mingled strangely with the solemn surge of the ocean, the sighing of the summer wind and the low, sweet twittering of nest-hidden birds. Nature



was full of the Sabbath joy, and only the "beings breathing thoughtful breath," for whom that Sabbath was specially meant, seemed indifferent to it, or weary of it.

At one side of the house, under some wide-spreading willows, three or four young girls, with the latest summer novels in their hands, were swinging idly in their hammocks.

"Oh dear," sighed one of them, as she twirled over the leaves of her book and glanced at its closing words, "oh dear, there is about as much sensation in this book as there is in an Egyptian mummy. The author certainly has a genius for stupidity; and, as yet, I haven't discovered a genius for anything else."

"Then why do you read it, Laura?" asked one of her companions.

"Why? Oh, because I am stupid too, I suppose. I am sure I do not know any other reason, for really it is as hard work to read it as it is to drink poor coffee without cream or sugar. But if I have been stupid, I'll be stupid no longer. Lie there, you witless thing;" and Laura tossed the despised book far off into the grass. "And may he who finds you think more of you than I do. Girls, come; I want something fresh: let's go to the beach."

"To the beach?" echoed two or three sleepy voices. "Oh no, Laura; it is too warm."



"Then stay where you are; only please excuse me from remaining in your interesting society any longer." And springing from her hammock, Laura Stanton crossed the lawn and entered the house.

"Margery," she called from the foot of the wide stair-case, "are you in your room?"

"Yes," answered a pleasant voice. "What is it, Laura?"

"Don't you want to go to the beach?"

"With you? Yes, if you will wait for me: I'll be ready in five minutes." And in little more than that time a young girl ran down the stairs and joined Laura, who was impatiently walking up and down the hall.

"Have I kept you waiting?" she asked. "I'm sorry, but I'm ready now, Laura. Are we going alone?"

"Yes, I hope so," Laura answered, in a decided voice as they left the house. "I've seen enough of the other girls for one day: they are all as sleepy and stupid as if they had just dined on poppies."

Margery laughed a little, but at the same time she said: "How little patience you have with anyone who isn't bright and lively, Laura! I am afraid you will be tired of me before our walk is over, for, to own the truth, I am very far from feeling as brilliant as a diamond to-day."



"I haven't always patience with bright things either," Laura said, fretfully, as she opened her parasol. "I do wish that sun would hide some of its superfluous radiance behind a cloud. It is perfectly intolerable."

"You must remember it is mid-summer," Margery answered. "The sun in shining is only doing its duty, Laura."

"Very well; I'm sure I have no objection; only I wish it would not let its duty interfere with my comfort," Laura said, in a peevish voice.

"Perhaps it would not, if we were doing our duty, too," Margery said, with a little laugh that ended in a sigh. "I am not perfectly sure that our duty calls us to the beach this afternoon; are you, Laura?"

"Don't begin to preach, I beg of you," Laura said, with quick impatience. "One sermon a day is all I am willing to hear."

"You haven't heard even that to-day," Margery answered.

"No. And I am glad I haven't. It is one of the pleasant things about going into the country for the summer that one is not expected—for propriety's sake—to go to church at least once every Sabbath."

"I do not really suppose, though, that the fact that we are in the country is any good excuse for



our living like the heathen," Margery said, in a sober voice.

"Nonsense," Laura answered, scornfully. "What is the use of talking in that sanctimonious way? You are no better than the rest of us, Margery. Come now, confess. What have you been doing all day?"

"Doing? Oh, I've been writing letters," Margery acknowledged with a careless laugh. "It is a fortunate thing for me that every seventh day is Sunday—my letters would never get answered if it was not."

"There, it is just as I told you," Laura said, in triumph; "we are all alike. There ought to be a new commandment written for us, and this is the way it should read: 'Remember the Sabbath day, and do all your extra sleeping, and novel-reading, and letter-writing in it.' Now if that only was the fourth commandment, I think we would have no difficulty in keeping it perfectly."

Margery's bright face looked for a moment very serious.

"I am afraid we are worse than the heathen, Laura," she said; "they do not know the commandments, but we do know them, and yet do not obey them."

"There, you are preaching again," Laura said, reproachfully. "Truly, Margery, I hardly know you to-day, you seem disposed to take such serious



views of such trifling matters. The ant-hills"—and she poked irritably at one in the path with her parasol—"are all Alps to you this afternoon, I believe. Hark! What bell is that?" she asked, in a changed voice, as forth on the still, sweet, summer air came the pleasant tones of a church bell.

"Why, it is that chapel bell, I suppose," Margery explained, pointing, as she spoke, to a neat white chapel just opposite to them.

"What can it be ringing for at this hour?"

"For Sunday-school, probably. Don't you see the children going in at the gate?"

Laura glanced across the street at the groups of smiling, prettily-dressed children with a contemptuous expression on her young face.

"What kind of a Sunday-school do you suppose they have in this out-of-the-way place?" she asked, in a scornful voice.

"I don't know. In truth, I don't know much about Sunday-schools in any place. Do you, Laura?"

"No. I do not know that I ever went to one in my life."

"Nor I. Suppose, by way of variety, we go to-day, Laura."

"Go to Sunday-school! What for?" Laura sharply demanded.

"Why, I thought I told you. Just for variety's



sake. But then, seriously, Laura, it cannot harm us to go once, and see what a Sunday-school is like."

"No. And, like some highly-recommended medicines, that will probably be its chief virtue. If it cannot harm us, it will not be likely to do us much good, either. However, Margery, I don't care. We'll go, if you want to. The day is dull, and I'm duller; and this Sunday-school will probably be best described by the superlative degree of that amusing adjective. So it will all be 'much of a muchness,' and I do like things to harmonize."

"Always?" laughed Margery. "The sharper the contrast the better in this case, I should say. But cross over, Laura, and we'll go in. May be we will find a cure for dullness here. Who knows?"

"No one, I suppose," Laura said, indifferently, as she followed Margery across the dusty street. And, without a thought of the One who was watching them, and who had guided their steps to that quiet chapel, the two girls entered it and took their seats.

It was still early; and with curious eyes Margery watched the children, as, with their bright, expectant faces, they came in, some singly, some in little smiling companies of two or three, and passed quietly to their classes. Especially she noticed the Bibles that, with few exceptions, were carefully carried in their little hands.



"Laura," she whispered soon, "suppose some one here should ask us if we ever read the Bible?"

"I should answer, I should tell them, No; not in vacation. I prefer novels," Laura answered, carelessly.

Margery did not smile as Laura expected she would; instead, she looked still more disturbed.

"I feel ashamed of myself when I look at these children, Laura," she whispered again, in a few moments, "and I wish I had a Bible here now."

"It is but a few steps to the hotel," Laura said, "and if a Bible is so necessary to your happiness, you might run to your room and get your own."

"I might go to my room I know, Laura," Margery replied; "but I should not find a Bible there, because—I did not bring one from home."

"You packed only useful things in your trunk, I suppose," Laura said, without the slightest sympathy for Margery's serious mood. "Well, to be candid, so did I. Something has usually to be crowded out of every trunk, you know, as well as—according to Mrs. Whitney—out of every life. And so I left out my Bible to make room for my novels."

For the second time that day Laura's thoughtless words seemed to trouble Margery.

"Hush, please," she said, pleadingly; "they are going to begin."

The brief opening exercises of the little school



were soon over, and with a face full of interest, Margery was watching as the classes near her turned to their lessons, when a voice beside her said:

“Good afternoon, Miss Hamilton; I am glad to meet you here to-day.”

In great surprise Margery turned to the speaker, a pleasant-faced, gray-haired, old gentleman, who smiled kindly as he met her astonished eyes.

She recognized him then as Professor Carter, a man of wide reputation in literary and scientific circles, and, like herself, for the last few weeks a sojourner in that quiet sea-side hamlet. Only a few mornings before, on the beach, Laura and herself, with several other young girls, had listened with eager attention while Professor Carter had talked to them of jelly and star-fishes, and explained the wonderful construction and marvelous beauty and adaptation of means to an end, in even the least and simplest of God's creations. There had seemed nothing strange in seeing and hearing him then; why was it, Margery wondered in even that first moment of recognition, that his presence in Sunday-school should cause her so much surprise? Whatever the reason, it was certainly not because a Sunday-school was a new or a strange place to Professor Carter.

“Are you interested in Sunday-schools as well as star-fishes, Miss Hamilton?” he asked, pleas-



antly. "I am. No studying I have ever done in other books has afforded me half the pleasure and profit I have gained from the study of my Bible. And now, that I am an old man, I still find an ever-fresh enjoyment in going over these Sabbath-school lessons and getting new insights into their meanings."

Professor Carter's kind words only deepened the strange sense of humiliation under which Margery was suffering that afternoon. She felt very unwilling to acknowledge just then that she knew nothing of Sunday-schools and their lessons; but, whatever her other faults might be, Margery possessed at least one queenly virtue: she was truthful. Not even to secure Professor Carter's good opinion would she pretend to be better than she really was. And so now, as he waited for her answer, she said, with humble sincerity,—

"I am afraid I do not know much about Sunday-schools, Professor Carter. I do not think I was ever in one before."

"There has been a sad omission, then, in your education, I fear, Miss Hamilton," Professor Carter said, kindly. "But because a thing has been delayed or omitted, it by no means follows that it is never to find a place in our heart and life. Suppose, since we have met here now, and seem to be the only strangers present, we go over the lesson for to-day together?"



"You are very kind," Laura said, as Professor Carter looked at her.

"Oh, I should like it ever so much," Margery said, in a glad, interested voice; "but," and her bright face sobered a little, "I am very sorry, but I have no Bible."

"We started for the beach, Professor Carter," Laura interposed, thinking she would place both Margery and herself in as favorable a light as possible. "We did not know then that there was a Sunday-school. Of course, if we had thought, when we left the house of coming here, we would have brought our Bibles with us."

"I am not telling a falsehood, for we could have borrowed Bibles," the girl whispered to her reproachful conscience as she finished her little speech. But Margery's truthful spirit was alarmed at once. Laura's words certainly implied that they had Bibles in their rooms, and Margery could not consent to be painted in any fairer colors than she deserved.

"Even if I had intended coming here, it would not have made any difference in my case," she said, humbly. "I am ashamed to own it, but I left my Bible at home."

What a contrast in character those two girls were! Professor Carter thought, as he listened to them. And for a moment he sighed, as he reflected how often the world would applaud the



fair-seeming of the one and frown coldly on the pure sincerity of the other. But he only said,—

“You left your best behind you, then, I think, Miss Hamilton ; but I do not believe you will ever make such a mistake again, and for to-day, fortunately, I can supply your lack.” And he handed Margery his own well-worn and evidently much-read pocket Bible, and showing her the passage selected for study that day, began the lesson.

Had Margery ever before in her young life had just such a lesson, or just such a teacher, as she had that Sabbath afternoon in that little chapel by the sea ? She did not think so. Professor Carter taught like one who thoroughly understood his subject, and who was also thoroughly interested in it ; and Margery listened as the pupils of such teachers are wont to listen. Even Laura was charmed out of her indifference, and drawing nearer to Margery, looked over the Bible with her and followed the verses as Professor Carter, in clear and forcible words, explained them. It was a new world into which he was leading his young listeners ; and to Margery it seemed a world she would never tire of exploring.

“How much there is in the Bible !” she said, earnestly. “So much that is hidden, and that we, who just read the words carelessly, never see. I thought this lesson a very plain and simple one



when we first read it over; but now it seems to me like the geode I once saw in a mineral cabinet. It looked like nothing but a dull, round stone as I held it in my hand; but the geologist opened it for me, and took it to the light, and then I saw that it was full of gems that glowed with beautiful fire. Oh, I am glad I came here to-day, and I am sure I shall never forget this lesson, Professor Carter."

"I hope you will not," Professor Carter quietly answered, and then he paused.

It was not enough—though it was much—to have interested those young girls in the Bible as an attractive study. He would fain reveal it to them as a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path. How, he silently questioned, should he do so? How apply its deep, spiritual lessons to their hearts, and touch their consciences with its solemn truths?

It was Laura who gave him the clue he wanted. "I think this has really been a very interesting lesson," she said, breaking the silence that she supposed indicated that the teacher had finished his work; "but there is just one thing, Professor Carter, that I do not understand, and that is, why, in all religious teaching, so much stress is always laid upon faith. It seems very unnecessary to me. I think most of the people we meet believe the Bible. I am sure I do. And yet it is the



burden of all the sermons we hear, as well as of the Bible itself. It is always believe, believe. Why is it, Professor Carter?"

With kind, but penetrating eyes, Professor Carter looked at the young girl.

"You say that you believe," he said, kindly. "Now, will you tell me just what you mean when you make that assertion?"

Laura hesitated a little. "Why I mean—I mean—I suppose I mean I don't doubt," she said, desperately, at last; "The Bible says a thing is true, and I believe it is, of course."

"Just as you would believe me, if I should tell you that at this moment, as I look from that window, I see an ocean steamer outward bound for Europe sailing along the beach?"

"Yes, sir, just so," Laura said, in triumph, satisfied now that she had established her position, and proved beyond question that she believed.

"Very well," was the quiet answer, "that belief is good—as far it goes. But, tell me now, would your faith in that steamer carry you to Europe if you never took passage on it, and never placed your foot upon its deck?"

"Why, no, sir, of course not;" Laura said, while she secretly thought that, for a wise man, Professor Carter certainly asked very foolish questions.

"Then your faith in that steamer is simply the



mere careless assent that you give to an assertion of mine in which you feel little or no personal interest, and that does not in the least affect your life. Is it not so?"

"Yes, sir," Laura said, slowly, and with a growing conviction that though Professor Carter's questions might be foolish, they were, none the less, very uncomfortable questions to answer. "Yes, sir, I suppose it is. And," she added, a little defiantly, "I do not understand how it can be anything else."

"No, perhaps you do not. But now let me ask you one question: Does your faith in the Bible—the faith you say you possess, and that allows you to leave that precious book at home unread—seem to you any more real and personal than your faith in that steamer? Will that faith bear you in safety through all the storms and perils you must encounter on life's ocean? Can you trust it to sustain you when you come to the dark river we must some day cross, and to lead you through it all in triumph, a redeemed child, home to your Father's house in heaven?"

Very low and unsteady came the answer Laura felt forced to give,—

"I—do—not—know."

"And do you think a faith that cannot give a decided answer to these solemn questions a trustworthy or soul-satisfying thing? Do you not, in



your heart, feel that there must be something better, something you have not yet grasped, not yet felt in your life?"

"What would be something better?" It was Margery who spoke now, and the tone of her voice showed how earnest and interested she was.

"The faith that a Christian has in the promises of his God; the confidence of a trusting child in the protection of its father."

Something in those words sounded at once very strange and very beautiful to Margery.

"I am not sure," she said, slowly, "I am not sure that I understand just what you mean by a Christian, Professor Carter?"

A beautiful light illumined Professor Carter's noble face as he answered:

"I should call a Christian one who, loving Christ as his Saviour, is willing to obey Him and is not afraid to trust Him."

"It must be hard to be such a Christian," Laura said.

"Hard? Perhaps so, save as love makes it easy."

"And do you think there really are many such Christians?" Laura asked, in her secret heart anxious to change the conversation and make it less personal.

"What have the many to do with you and with me?" Professor Carter asked kindly, but



very gravely. "This is the question for us to ask, Miss Stanton, "Are we such Christians, are we willing to be such?"

"How can I be?" The low question—the most solemn, perhaps, that in all her life she would ever ask—came from Margery; and, with trembling lips and moist eyes, she waited for Professor Carter's answer.

"By following Christ," he said, gently; "there is no other way."

"But I do not know how to do that;" and the tears Margery could no longer restrain, fell now on the Bible in her hand.

"Prayer and your Bible will tell you how."

"But I don't know—I don't understand," Margery said again, in a tearful, pleading voice. "It all seems so dim, so far away; I cannot grasp it, and I want something living, something real to cling to."

"Then draw near to Christ," was the tender answer. "The woman who touched but the hem of his garment knew how real he was."

There was a little stir all about them just then. The lessons were ended, and the children were rising to sing. Margery brushed her tears away, and, closing the Bible, handed it to Professor Carter. He took it, and took at the same time the little hand that offered it.

"I am to leave Quantuck to-morrow," he said,



“and I may never see you again, Miss Hamilton. Before we part to-day, will you give me a promise that will make me very happy? Will you promise me to be a Christian? Will you read your Bible, and pray until the way that leads to heaven grows plain, and then will you walk in it?”

“Yes,” Margery humbly promised; “I will if I can.”

“Then I shall think of you in the future with none but pleasant recollections and bright anticipations,” Professor Carter continued; “for I know you can if you will. There is an old and wonderful book, Miss Hamilton,—not much read in these days of trashy, sentimental novels, I am sorry to say,—that describes a journey of a pilgrim on his way from this world to heaven. That grand old pilgrim is but a type of all Christians. Life comes to each of us with different gifts, and yet it is but a pilgrimage for us all. What its end will be depends entirely upon the guide we follow, the road we choose. That you may choose the one that, whatever its windings, will conduct you surely and safely inside the gate of the Celestial City, is the best prayer I can offer for you now, as I bid you good-by.”

“Where are you going now, Margery?” Laura asked, when, a few minutes later, the two young girls stood once more alone in the street.

“I am going to heaven,” Margery answered, in



a dreamy voice, that showed that her thoughts were still far away from the scenes around her.

"What!" Laura exclaimed in astonishment; "have you lost your reason, Margery; what do you mean?"

Laura's sharp question recalled Margery to the consciousness that she was living in a world that was not very apt to strew the pilgrim's road to heaven with roses. Laura's tone did not promise her much sympathy; but she was too much in earnest to be silent.

"I mean just this," she said, in a low, tender voice; "I mean to be a better girl than I have been. Laura, I mean to be a Christian. And I want you to be one, too. Laura, dear, we have been together all our lives. Come with me now, and let us go to heaven together."

"I am very well content with this world at present," Laura answered, with cool indifference. "I am not at all anxious to exchange it for another."

Margery's eyes filled; but neither tears nor gentle pleadings could avail with Laura then. And so in a silence that was full of solemn meaning, the two young girls, who had come that Sabbath afternoon to one of life's mysterious turning-points, where a deliberate choice, that would influence all their future years, must be made, walked home to their hotel.



## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND.

“But when Christiana came up to the Slough of Despond, she began to be at a stand.”—*Pilgrim's Progress, Part II.*

MARGERY'S first impulse, when, once more in her room alone, she had locked her door and taken off her hat, was to sit down and review the events of that afternoon.

How strange they all seemed! Only three hours before she was simply a bright, pleasant girl, careless and thoughtless, like the rest of her young friends: doing nothing that she supposed to be very wrong, but yet not consciously trying in all things to do right: not always satisfied with herself, perhaps; but still very far from condemning herself, or from feeling that any great and radical change was needed in her heart and life.

And now she sat there pledged by her solemn promise to Professor Carter to be a Christian.

Did she really want to be one?

She had thought so, while in Sunday-school;



she had felt sure she did, in fact, until something in Laura's cold, unsympathetic manner had chilled her enthusiasm, and reminded her that she might have to renounce much that the world called good, if from that hour she set out to walk heavenward.

Could she renounce it? She was not sure.

In truth, she had a very hazy, indistinct idea of what the Christian life really was, and of what, as a Christian, she sought herself to do and be. She could not be just as she had always been, she supposed; but just how she was to be different she was puzzled to decide.

She was the only daughter of wealthy, worldly parents who lived for fashion and power; and who, in their absorbing interest in this world, forget the solemn truth that there was another and more enduring world for which they ought to be prepared. The Bible they regarded as an old-fashioned, unreadable book, but still one that it was very proper and respectable to possess; and so they gave it a place in their library, but cast it out of their lives. Church-going was another old-fashioned custom the world still continued to consider eminently proper and respectable; and so they held their pew in the most fashionable church in their neighborhood, and occupied it occasionally, and in doing that, considered that they had done all that could justly be required of them.



And in this worldly home and atmosphere Margery had grown up, until now she stood upon the verge of womanhood, well taught in much that it is useful and desirable to know, but sadly ignorant of her Bible and of her Saviour, of heaven and the way there. And never, until to-day, had it seemed to her very necessary that she should know much about those solemn matters.

Now, as she sat alone in her quiet room that Sabbath afternoon, this question kept pressing for a positive answer. Would she truly keep her promise? Would she fully and firmly decide to be a Christian?

For a little while she hesitated. She could not forget that she had promised; neither could she satisfy the new, strange hunger of her soul that seemed craving something more and better than it had ever yet known.

"Yes," she finally decided, "I said I would be a Christian, and so I will be."

Her next thought was: "How am I to become one? what ought I to do?"

"Study her Bible and pray!" Professor Carter had told her.

Then Margery concluded her first want was a Bible. She had none, but perhaps Laura's mother, Mrs. Stanton, in whose care her parents had placed her for the summer, possessed one. She would ask her, and, leaving her room, Margery



went in search of Mrs. Stanton. She found her sitting on the piazza absorbed in a book.

"Ah! Margery!" she said, pleasantly, as the young girl came to her side. "I have scarcely seen you to-day, dear; sit down." And as Margery obeyed, the lady continued:

"I am reading the most wonderful book, Margery, and I want you and Laura to read it as soon as I have finished it."

"What is it?" Margery asked, almost forgetting her errand in her interest in the new book.

"George Eliot's '*Romola*.' It is certainly a grand book. I do not believe a more powerful character than Tito was ever described by a novelist: so pleasing and lovable in the beginning, and then so slowly but surely growing worthless and contemptible, just because he hadn't——"

"Hadn't what?" Margery asked curiously, as Mrs. Stanton paused in her criticism.

"Why, I hardly know myself!" Mrs. Stanton answered. "But some important element was wanting in his character, and so when he was exposed to temptations he had not strength to resist them."

"I should say that missing element was Christian principle," quietly remarked a lady sitting near Mrs. Stanton. "Probably nothing was farther from George Eliot's thought than to write a plea for personal religion or Christian education,



but I always feel as if she had, unconsciously, written a very powerful one, when I read 'Romola,' and see in its clear unfolding of character how impossible it is, without Christian principle, for even the best-intentioned nature to stand firm in the hour of temptation."

Margery looked wishfully after the lady, who had just then arose and left the piazza. Christian principle! Vaguely the girl felt that must be what she would need if she adhered to her new resolve, and that thought reminded her of her object in seeking Mrs. Stanton.

"Mrs. Stanton," she said, a little timidly, "I want to ask a favor: Will you lend me a Bible?"

"A Bible," Mrs. Stanton repeated. "Why, my dear, what do you want of a Bible?"

"I want to read it," Margery answered, wondering, as she did so, why her voice should tremble in speaking of the Bible, when she was sure it would not if she were speaking about a novel.

"Read it?" Mrs. Stanton echoed in a tone of polite amusement; "cannot you find anything more interesting than the Bible to read, Margery?"

"I do not want anything else, Mrs. Stanton."

"Well, my dear, though I do not admire your taste, I wish I could gratify it; but I did not bring a Bible with me."

"Oh dear," Margery thought, "I wonder



if people generally are in the habit of crowding their Bibles out of their trunks and leaving them at home?"

She was still considering that sober question when Mrs. Stanton glanced up from her book and noticed her disappointed face.

"Margery," she said, "if I didn't bring a Bible I did bring the next thing to it, a prayer-book, and if that will answer your purpose you are welcome to it. You will find it on the table in my room."

"Thank you," Margery said, gratefully. And going to Mrs. Stanton's room, she secured the little prayer-book, and then, returning to her own room, sat down with it in her hand and looked at it curiously. Slowly, after awhile, she opened it and turned the leaves. There was just one thing she wanted to find—something that would tell her what, as a Christian, she ought to be and to do.

The rustling sound she made in turning the leaves ceased presently. She had found, she thought, what she wanted, and the young girl's head drooped low over the little book as she read :

"My duty towards God, is to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength ; to worship him, to give him thanks,



to put my whole trust in him; to call upon him, to honor his holy name and his Word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life.

Margery trembled as she finished that solemn sentence, but still she read on :

“My duty towards my neighbor, is to love him as myself—and to do to all men, as I would they should do unto me: to love, honor and succor my father and mother ; to honor and obey the civil authority ; to submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters ; to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters ; to hurt nobody by word or deed ; to be true and just in all my dealings ; to bear no malice nor hatred in my heart ; to keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering ; to keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity ; not to covet nor desire other men’s goods, but to learn and labor truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me.”

Was that what it was to be a Christian ?

Then who, oh, who could be sufficient for these things ?

Margery dropped the little book with a feeling of utter helplessness. How could she ever live that perfect life ?

She had not courage to turn the page, and so



she missed the next words of tender, helpful counsel, and there was no good angel near her to whisper that love to Christ was the first step in the Christian life, and that that love alone could make it possible to keep the laws of Christ's kingdom.

Margery's knowledge of Christ's love was small. She knew little more of the New Testament than she did of the Koran. Her only thought was that, as a Christian, she must make and keep herself good, and already the task set before her seemed far beyond her strength.

"I really do not know how I am to do it," she thought, the next morning, while dressing; "but I'll try. I'll try to-day to be perfectly kind and gentle, and good in every way and to everybody." And cherishing these lovely intentions in her mind, but trusting only in her own strength to perform them, Margery left her room without prayer, as was her custom, and joined her friends at the breakfast-table.

Usually, Margery was easily pleased at the table, and thoughtful and considerate of the servants. But that morning, in spite of her good resolutions, she felt, for some unaccountable reason, peevish and fault-finding.

She sent away one cup of coffee because it was cold, and another because it was too strong. Nothing pleased her fastidious appetite, and when the waiter, embarrassed by her complaints, misun-



derstood her order and brought her an omelet when she had requested poached eggs, she pushed back her chair and declared that with such stupid servants it was impossible to get a decent breakfast.

"What is the matter, Margery?" Laura asked, in surprise. "I never knew you to be so disagreeable at the table before."

Ordinarily, Laura could say what she pleased, and Margery would not take offense ; but now, the very fact that there was truth in her remark, made Margery resent it.

"I do not consider myself any more disagreeable than the occasion requires," she said, haughtily.

"Oh, well," Laura retorted, with equal spirit, "if the occasion requires such a display of temper on your part, I am glad it does not require me to submit to your caprices," and, with a toss of her head, she left the table.

Margery looked behind her with a serious, regretful face. What was she doing? Making every one who came in contact with her, irritable and uncomfortable in the beginning of her first day's attempt to live as a Christian. Was that being kind and gentle and good? It seemed very strange to the discouraged girl that, in less than an hour after making her good resolves, she should fail so miserably in performing them. What did it mean?



If Margery had been farther along in her Christian course, she would have known that good resolutions are something Satan will never allow us to execute if, by any art, he can frustrate or prevent us. To every good intention he will oppose some hindrance or temptation; and when we resolve in our own might, neglectful of the prayer that can alone give us power to perform, it is little wonder if we fail and fall.

Margery did not know this; she was only painfully conscious of her shortcomings, and mortified and angry with herself because of them, and, consequently, when she left the dining-room and joined a party of gay, young friends on the piazza, she was just in the mood to be vexed with every trifle and to fall an easy victim to every temptation.

"Oh, Margery," said one of the young girls, as she approached them, "didn't you lend Miss Chauncey 'Sir Gibbie'?"

"Yes," Margery answered; "what of it?"

"Oh, you ought to have heard her criticism upon it. It is too good to be lost, so I'll have to tell it to you; only I cannot give you the tone and manner with which she emphasized her words. Those you will have to imagine."

"I have no fears but my imagination will be equal to the effort," Margery said, scornfully. "What did she say?"

"Why, she said Miss Hamilton praised Mac-



Donald's 'Sir Gibbie' so highly she thought she would like to read it, and so she borrowed it of her. But, really, she was surprised at Miss Hamilton's poor taste. For her part, she did not enjoy low society in books any better than she did in real life ; and, after reading the first few chapters in 'Sir Gibbie,' with their common, vulgar characters and scenes, she found it quite impossible to read any farther. Miss Hamilton might, perhaps, enjoy such a book, but she did not understand how refined people could, and she was very thankful to say she could not."

Margery's face flushed with anger. That implied sneer on her literary taste touched her just where she was, foolishly, very sensitive ; but before she could speak one of the girls exclaimed,—

"Here comes Miss Chauncey now." And the next moment that young lady joined them, and Margery noticed at once that she held the condemned book in her hand.

"Good-morning, Miss Hamilton," she said, politely. "I have been looking for you, and am glad to find you. I want to return 'Sir Gibbie';" and as she spoke she offered the book with a polite "thank you!" to Margery.

Here was a fine opportunity for Margery at least to display the "grace of silence;" but in her mortified pride and vanity she missed it.



"You do not like the book, I believe," she said as she took it from Miss Chauncey.

"No, really," Miss Chauncey answered, in some surprise; "I cannot say that I do. It depicts such low life, and its characters are so vulgar and coarse, that I cannot enjoy it."

"And so," Margery said, in a cool, sarcastic tone, while her eyes flashed and her cheeks burned with her foolish, resentful feelings, "you make me think of a man, who, in looking on the ground for worms, loses sight of the sky, and is deaf to the birds that sing above his head. In dwelling on what you are pleased to call the low characters in the book, you have entirely overlooked all its beautiful thoughts, and all the helpful, precious lessons it is designed to teach. Well," she concluded scornfully, as she turned to one of the girls, "I am not, probably, as cultivated as Miss Chauncey, and not as much accustomed to high life, and good society, and, quite likely, my taste in books is low and vulgar. But I am thankful to be able to say that I do truly enjoy MacDonald's writings, and I endorse 'Sir Gibbie' as one of his most beautiful works. And if dear old Janet, and Robert, and Donal Grant are low, vulgar characters, then I am afraid Miss Chauncey will not feel at home in heaven, for she will find just such characters there."

"Three cheers for Margery!" called out one of



the mischievous girls ; while Miss Chauncey, as she turned angrily away, revenged herself by remarking : " Miss Hamilton's temper appears closely to resemble her taste, and I am glad to say I do not envy her the possession of either."

" Well, Margery," Laura exclaimed now, " if it is in this way that you intend to go to heaven, it is my opinion that you will be a long time getting there, and I had a little rather take my chance alone than in your company."

Poor Margery's conscience was already bitterly reproaching her for her unkind and uncalled-for speech, and, turning from the group of laughing thoughtless girls, she hurried to her room feeling deeply ashamed and almost discouraged.

" Oh dear," she sighed, " I may as well give up at once. I believe I have been more hateful and disagreeable this morning than I ever was before in my life. If this is what my efforts to be a Christian are to end in, I don't know but it would be better not to try again. Still," she said to herself soon, " I have only just begun, and I will not give up because of one failure. I will try a little longer."

True to her resolve for the next few days, poor Margery did try. She found a Bible at the village store, and, beginning with Genesis, she read chapter after chapter with great care, but, as she sadly felt, with little comfort. She tried to pray ; and now



a humiliating sense of her own sinfulness began, as never before, to grieve and oppress her. Often she was assailed with the sad temptation to believe that her prayers could not be heard, because she was so far from being what now she felt she ought to be. And while she was enduring this inward conflict, in her daily life she was moody and irritable, dissatisfied, as never before, with herself, and constantly making new and painful efforts, that only ended in sorrowful failures, to reach the standard she had set before herself.

It was a sad time, but as to Christian in the Slough of Despond, so to Margery "Help" came at last. She was sitting one morning on the beach, a little apart from the gay crowd that thronged the sands, looking off at the vast waters spread before her with eyes that took little notice of the shimmer and shine of the tossing waves, when a hand was suddenly extended to her, and a well-remembered voice said, "How do you do, Miss Hamilton?"

With a pleased face Margery looked up.

"Oh, is it really Professor Carter?" she exclaimed, joyfully.

"Yes, really Professor Carter," that gentleman answered with a smile.

"I am so glad to see you, sir," Margery said, "but it is a great surprise. I thought you had left Quantuck."



"Your thought was true. I did leave Quantuck as I told you I was to do," Professor Carter explained; "but I came back last night with an invalid friend, whom I hope this pure air will benefit. And once here my next thought was of my Sunday-school scholar. I trust she has a good report to give me of herself." And the kind eyes of the old man looked searchingly into Margery's young, but very sober face.

"No," the girl said, with sad truthfulness; "I have not a good report to give, Professor Carter. I have been in trouble ever since I saw you last."

"Trouble! Why is that?" he asked, gravely.

"I don't know why," Margery said, in a humble voice. "It seems very strange to me. But, Professor Carter, I have been trying to be good—to be a Christian, as I promised—and instead of being good I have been more wicked than I ever was before in my life. I cannot be good. And I am discouraged. I do not believe it is any use for me to try to be a Christian."

"Poor child!" the old man said, as he sat down beside her; "have you but just started, and are you already in the Slough of Despond?"

Margery was still a stranger to the "Pilgrim's Progress," and did not understand his allusion, but the name struck her at once.

"Yes," she said slowly, "I believe that is just where I am. But," and she looked with pleading



eyes at Professor Carter, "the trouble is, that I do not know how to get out."

"Do not feel disheartened," was the kind answer. "It is easy to fall in, but the 'steps' by which we must climb out are very near and plain. When we are most conscious of our own helplessness the Helper is often nearest to us. Now that you have learned—and hard though you may think it, it is a precious lesson—that you are not able, in your own strength, to save yourself or do anything right, why will you not commit your cause to Christ and let him do all things for you?"

Margery pondered that question in silence for a few moments.

"How can I do that?" she asked soon.

"Simply by trusting to his strength instead of your own."

"But I do not know how to trust." And Margery's face and voice both told that her trouble was very great.

"Have you ever been in any great danger?" Professor Carter asked, kindly.

"No," Margery said, "not in any that I remember. Never in any, I am sure, that my father was not strong enough to save me from."

"Then, if any danger threatened you now, or if there was something you felt obliged to do for which your strength was not equal, you would feel



safe, would you not, if your father was near, or if you could go to him and lay both your task and yourself in his hands?"

"O, yes," Margery said, with glad assurance, "it would all be right then, when my father took charge of it."

"Then the love and confidence you can so easily give to your father, can you not also give to one stronger and wiser and tenderer than even he? Can you not see Christ waiting before you now, and saying to you, as you struggle with your sins and vainly try to make yourself better: 'My child, give up your useless efforts and come to me. Let your burden drop into my hands. I am able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think.'"

Margery did not answer at once; but soon, with a changed face, she looked at Professor Carter.

"And is that all it means to be a Christian?" she asked.

"Yes, that is all; but oh, how much that all includes!"

Margery hardly noticed Professor Carter's last words.

"It is so different from what I imagined," she said, in a bright, relieved voice. "I supposed my thoughts and words and actions must all be changed; and I have been watching them and trying with all my might to make them perfect. I



thought being a Christian meant being good in all such things."

"Such things are the results of one's being a Christian," was the quiet answer; "they are the beautiful fruits that show that the root is alive and healthy. And in every true Christian life they follow as naturally as the bud expands into the flower. But to be a Christian, my child, does not mean, primarily, to be a law-keeper—though it includes the keeping of the law—it means first, and before all else, to be a Christ-lover."

"Margery," called Mrs. Stanton just then from her seat, a short distance from them, "Margery, come; it is time we went back to the house."

Very reluctantly Margery arose.

"I must say good-by again," Professor Carter said, as he extended his hand. "I am sorry to say that I am going away this afternoon."

"And won't I see you again, sir?" Margery asked, in a voice that seemed to plead for an affirmative answer.

"Not to-day, nor to-morrow, I fear, but some time, I trust. And then I shall hope to hear that my little pilgrim is going steadily on in the way that is set before her."

"I will try to do so," Margery softly promised. "Oh, sir," she added, gratefully, "how glad I am you came to-day! how can I ever thank you for the help you have given me?"



“By some day, if it is ever in your power, giving the same or better help to some other who may need it,” Professor Carter answered. “That is the beautiful law of all true life, my child. We receive from one only to pass on to another. And now, I must not keep your friends waiting. And so, once more, in all the fullness of its beautiful old Saxon significance of God be with you—good-by.”



## CHAPTER III.

### OUT OF THE WAY.

“ ‘What dost thou here, Christian?’ said he, at which words Christian knew not what to answer; wherefore at present he stood speechless before him.”—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

IT was a damp, gloomy morning; gray curtains of sea-fog enveloped the house, hiding from view the street and all surrounding objects. One could not even walk on the piazza without feeling the fine, light mist, that, penetrating through warm wraps, chilled alike one's flesh and spirits and ruthlessly destroyed the freshness of daintily-fluted summer dresses and straightened the curl and wave of carefully-arranged hair. There was no denying that the weather was very disagreeable; the wind never blew more directly from the east in “Bleak House” than it did that morning in Quantuck, and it was evident, even to the most hopeful, that beach-going, the one grand occupation of summer visitors to the sea-shore, must for that day be abandoned.

That fact might be a disappointment to some,



but apparently it mattered little to the group of young girls who had possession of one of the parlors, and were talking and laughing in true girlish fashion over their crewels and boxes of French bon-bons.

Some very important subject was evidently under discussion; so Margery thought as, passing the parlor-door, she glanced in, and then, in answer to Laura's beckoning hand, went nearer and joined the group.

"Oh, Margery!" said one of the girls, "we were just wishing for you. Guess what we are going to do Saturday night?"

"Go to bed like sensible girls, I suppose," Margery said, as she dropped into a vacant chair.

"Well, perhaps we may before morning, but we sha'n't be in any hurry to do that. We are going to have a masquerade ball, Margery. Mrs. Richman has planned it and made all the arrangements, and it is going to be a grand affair; the finest party of the kind ever given in Quantuck, she says."

"Why do you have it Saturday night?" Margery asked.

"Why, because that is decidedly the most suitable night. There will be more gentlemen out from the city then than at any other time, and, besides, we could not get ready sooner. We will have only four days for preparation as it is, and



we cannot wait any longer, for next week will be the first of September, and you know there will be a great breaking-up then in the house, as many will be going away."

"Yes ; I am going myself then," Margery remarked, half-rising as she spoke, as if she had quite a mind to go at once.

"Well then, that is only an additional reason for having the party Saturday night. Come, Margery, don't go ; sit down again and don't look so sober. You will join us, won't you ?"

Margery did not answer that question. It offered her a good opportunity to show her colors, and quietly, but firmly, refuse to do anything doubtful that could be suspected of dishonoring them. But, like many another, Margery was not ready for such open and loyal allegiance. It seemed much easier and pleasanter to try to compromise the question, and in some way manage to escape without a positive, unhesitating no.

"How can you have the party Saturday night without encroaching on the Sabbath ?" was her next sober question.

"Oh, easily ; for, like Cinderella, we are all going to stop at the first stroke of twelve."

"That was just what Cinderella failed to do, if I am not mistaken."

"Well," Laura broke in impatiently, "what if she did ? If I remember the story, her failure



was the best thing that could have happened to her. And if Saturday night there should be any Cinderellas here who lose their slippers because they are a little tardy, I do not myself believe it will be an unpardonable crime. We will all be quiet and asleep by sunrise, and sunrise is early enough to count the beginning of any day from. So don't try to talk nonsense any longer, Margery, but just be sensible and do like the rest of us."

"Yes, do, Margery," coaxed another of the girls. "You will lose the greatest fun of the season if you don't. We have all been choosing our characters this morning; now, what do you think I am going to be?"

"Cinderella herself, perhaps," Margery answered.

"No; at least not intentionally in the beginning. I am going to be the little old woman in Mother Goose, who swept the cobwebs out of the sky; and if I don't sweep the cobwebs away from some conceited eyes next Saturday night, then my name won't be Effie Moffat."

Margery moved restlessly in her chair. She wished she could get away from the girls, and yet she did not know how to go without vexing them.

"Have you all chosen?" she asked, for the sake of something to say. "Laura, what are you going to be?"



"Yes, Laura, what? You haven't told us yet," chimed in Effie.

Laura drew down her pretty face, wrinkled her forehead and puckered her rosy lips, and drawled, with slow decision, through her nose, "I won't believe anything, Josiah Allen, till I've got holt of it."

"Oh, Josiah Allen's wife," laughed two or three of the girls. "Laura, that will be splendid. Now, Margery, it is your turn to choose. What character will you take?"

Margery hesitated. "I—must—think—about it," she said, slowly. And then, as her conscience urged her to be more decided, she added,—

"I don't know; perhaps I won't take any."

"Not take any? Oh, Margery, you must. If you are not in costume, we won't let you go."

"Perhaps it won't break my heart if you don't," Margery tried to say playfully.

But her answer was received with a perfect storm of expostulation.

"Come now, Margery, don't say that; you know you do not want to be singular," Laura urged.

"Yes, come, Margery, you know we will all feel sorry if you don't join us," coaxed Effie.

And, "Oh, do, do, say you'll dress, Margery," pleaded another of the girls. "We have all been so united and had such pleasant times together this summer, now don't, just as we are



going to separate, spoil half our enjoyment by refusing to join us in this party. You haven't any very particular reason for refusing, have you?"

"No," Margery answered, slowly, "I don't know as I have, only—I am afraid—it isn't right—for me."

"Not right for you," exclaimed one of the girls. "Well, your eyes must be possessed of wonderful magnifying power if you can see any harm in it, either for yourself or us. There comes Mrs. Stanton now," she continued, as that lady looked smilingly in at the door, "let's ask her opinion." And acting at once upon her own suggestion, the young girl called,—

"Mrs. Stanton, please come here a moment."

And as Mrs. Stanton approached them, hastened to say,—

"Mrs. Stanton, please tell us now: do you think there is any harm in our having a masquerade ball Saturday night?"

"No, there is no harm in your having a masquerade or any other kind of a ball, either on Saturday night or any other night," Mrs. Stanton decidedly answered. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, it is only a question of conscience," Effie explained.

"You better let it alone, then," Mrs. Stanton advised. "People do not trouble themselves much with such questions nowadays, except, in-



deed, a few rigid fanatics, who would have you believe that everything is sinful except psalm-singing." And, having delivered her worldly-wise speech, the lady swept from the room.

"There now, Margery, I hope you are convinced," Effie said, quickly. "Come; don't hesitate any longer. Decide at once, and say you'll dress and be happy with the rest of us."

Poor Margery, as she listened to these entreaties, felt like one between two fires. Conscience was urging her to come bravely out, and plainly give her reasons for refusing to attend the party. But a dread of being, as Laura had said, "singular;" a great unwillingness to say or do anything that might expose her to ridicule, and—strongest of all, perhaps—a secret desire to go with her young friends, all drew her towards them. While she hesitated and sought to find some way by which she might satisfy her conscience and at the same time please herself, Laura pitilessly attacked her.

"Margery is turning Puritan," she said, scornfully. "She is growing afraid of everything bright and pleasant, for fear it is wicked. I am not sure but she would cover the sun with sackcloth if she could, and paint all the flowers black. I must say, some people do take the strangest and most unreasonable fancies into their heads. And then they expect us to believe that they are right and we are wrong. Well, all I have to say is, that



they are welcome to their religion, and may keep it if they wish to. If they cannot make it attractive and cheerful, there is no danger of my envying it or wanting to enjoy it with them."

The hot color rushed to Margery's troubled face. Laura's words were especially hard to bear, because only the day before Margery had urged her once more to resolve with her to be a Christian. And, for a little while, the girl had seemed softened and almost persuaded. Now the Tempter came with one of his most subtle suggestions, and whispered that perhaps it would be better for Margery to yield and attend the party, for that would show that religion did not frown on pleasant things, and then, may be, Laura would be more willing to believe in it and seek it for herself.

Even while these thoughts were forming in her mind, Effie exclaimed,—

"Turning Puritan, are you, Margery? Then I have just thought of a lovely dress for you. You shall go as 'Priscilla, the Puritan Maiden.' I know just how you ought to dress, and I'll help you to get everything you need, even to a spinning-wheel! And now, Margery, you will go with us, won't you?"

"Yes, Margery," Laura broke in again, "if you ever expect to influence me—for good—as I suppose you would say, you must not put every innocent amusement under the ban, and you must



not look like a walking collection of penitential hymns, either. You must be just as bright and lovely and attractive as you can be, and then, of course, you will make me wish to be like you."

"Yes, that is so, Margery," cried, in one breath, two or three of the girls; and Margery did not stop to consider whether the things that Laura called lovely were the same that St. Paul meant when he said: "Whatsoever things are lovely, . . . think on these things." She truly loved to be popular; she did want to please her friends; and she was not willing to own to herself that a ball-room was hardly the place in which Christ would seek for or wish to find his followers. Nor would she acknowledge, frankly, that a Saturday night revel was not the best preparation for the Sabbath, nor likely to make her, like the women of old, run early in the morning to find her Lord.

"Everybody will go," she said to herself, "and what everybody does—cannot be wrong."

Margery found it easier to use negatives than affirmatives just there. It seemed a little difficult to say, "What everybody does—must be right." And she gladly hurried on to her next conclusion, "and, any way, it will be for only this once."

And, dismissing all thought of the serious interests that might be involved in "this once," Margery consented, and was soon as interested as



any of the girls in preparing her dress and making arrangements for the party.

Thus the next four days went by. Margery was very busy, and, perhaps, if she had been questioned, would have said she was very happy. But all the while there was a secret unrest and discontent in her heart that made her afraid to scrutinize her conduct too closely.

She was living in a constant whirl of excitement. She could not seem to find time for the Bible-reading and prayer that only a little while ago she had begun to think so precious; and if, occasionally, she had the time, she did not feel in the mood, and gladly availed herself of any excuse for avoiding what appealed to her now only as a disagreeable, irksome duty.

Some way there seemed to be a discord and strange want of sympathy between her Bible, with its tender but firm command, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus," and the gay occasion for which she was preparing. She could not reconcile the two; she could not successfully obey Christ and at the same time please the world.

The world, however, was visible and powerful; she must please it, or bear its scorn. And so, like many another, Margery chose what seemed the smoothest way, and once again Satan triumphed, while the Spirit was grieved.



Bright with the matchless splendor of the full August moon, fragrant with the perfume of flowers, and gay with the sound of brilliant music and dancing feet, the Saturday night so ardently anticipated came at last.

It was with secret pleasure that Margery turned to her glass that evening for a last look before joining her young friends in the parlor. Her quaint, old-fashioned costume suited her well. To her eyes, the face and figure she saw reflected in that glass were very pleasant to behold, and she could not help feeling that other eyes would likewise find them pleasant. And then, as she surveyed herself, there crept into her heart the vain and selfish desire, she had neither the will nor the wish to expel, that she might be thought pleasanter to look at than the other girls, and be, in fact, preferred before them all.

Vanity, self-love and pride, they were crushing down all Margery's purer and lovelier qualities, as wild animals ruthlessly trample the delicate wood violets beneath their feet, and she, in her blindness, did not know it. Well satisfied with her self-inspection, she turned at last from her glass, and just then some watching, pitying angel softly reminded her of a little thought she had somewhere read.

"Let the Christian remember that the only places that are beautiful and safe for him are the



places to which he can invite his Master to accompany him, and in which he can gladly look to him for sympathy and approval."

Margery stopped aghast. Could she do that? Could she kneel down—all flushed with vanity and the desire to surpass others, as she was—and ask her Saviour to go with her to that ball-room? Could she—dare she—ask him to smile upon all she might say and do that evening? No, she was forced to confess, she could not, and dare not, and for a single miserable minute she faltered.

"I wish it was over," she sighed; "I wish I need not go." But the next instant she heard Laura's voice in the hall; and dismissing her scruples, she hastened to join her.

Merrily the next two or three hours went by. It was just after a dance, and a little tired and heated, Margery was resting for a few moments when a servant came to her with a card.

Wonderingly, she took it and read:

*Rev. Archibald MacMillan*

And penciled underneath the name, the few words, "A friend of Professor Carter, with a message for Miss Hamilton."

"Oh dear, dear," Margery thought, as she held the innocent card in her hand and looked at it with troubled eyes, "what shall I do?"



She could not refuse to see Professor Carter's friend. She really did not want to do that; yet to go to him from that scene, and see him in that dress!

"If he only wasn't a minister," she whispered, despairingly, to herself, "it would not seem quite so bad. Oh dear, I don't see why ministers must always appear just when they are not wanted."

There was no escape for her; wanted or not, Mr. MacMillan had certainly appeared and was waiting for her and she must go to him. And with a clouded face, very unlike the gentle one with which she had last looked at Professor Carter, Margery threaded her way through the crowded halls to the little reception-room that was not that evening thrown open to the dancers.

A gentleman standing by the centre-table turned as he heard her light step, and Margery caught the quick look of surprise and regret that crossed his face as he first saw her. It was only a passing expression and quickly vanished, but Margery saw it. She could not have told, from that first glance at him, whether the stranger was young or old, handsome or the reverse; but she understood at once that he did not admire or approve of her, and that one look effectually counteracted all the foolish flattery to which she had just been, with so much pleasure and complacency, listening.

"Miss Hamilton, I presume," the gentleman



said, courteously. "I beg your pardon for calling at this late hour, but I arrived in Quantuck this evening, and am to leave early Monday morning. And this little book—which Professor Carter particularly requested me to hand to you—will, I trust, fully atone for my intrusion." And he offered Margery, as he spoke, a plain, yet richly bound book.

Mechanically, Margery took it and glanced at the title. It was a copy of an English edition of the "Pilgrim's Progress," containing very full notes and explanations.

The color rushed to Margery's face. She felt bitterly ashamed and humiliated, but she made a great effort to appear unconcerned, and without lifting her eyes, she said,—

"Professor Carter is very kind. I hope he is well."

"Very well. He bade me give you his kindest regards, and say——" and Mr. MacMillan hesitated a little, as if uncertain whether to deliver the message or retain it—"that he hoped his little pilgrim was going safely and surely on her course along the King's highway."

The gentle words, recalling, as they did, her precious talks with Professor Carter, completely broke down Margery's pride and reserve.

"I—I—don't look much like it," she faltered.

There was a moment's silence, but then, in a



grave, but gentle voice, Mr. MacMillan answered,—

“Our looks are not always truthful. May I ask—do you feel like it?”

The question probed deeply, and in the pain it caused her, Margery forgot that she was speaking to a stranger, and turned to him with an eager longing for help and relief.

“I—I thought I did once,” she answered, with humble sincerity. “I meant to keep my promise to Professor Carter. But—but—it is so hard. It seems as if many pleasant things must be renounced.”

Again Mr. MacMillan hesitated an instant. Then he said, as his eyes just glanced at Margery’s quaint dress, “To Priscilla, the Puritan maiden, renunciation only meant giving up everything to Christ, and finding all things in him.”

Margery winced a little. “I am not like Priscilla,” she said, humbly. “But,” she added, with a strong desire to excuse herself, “I did not mean to do anything very wrong. Everybody was going to this party; they did not think it wrong for them; then why should it be wrong for me?”

The little room was very quiet for a few moments.

Mr. MacMillan seemed unwilling to speak; but Margery panted for an answer to her question, and



almost desperately she repeated it, though a little changed in its form.

"Do you think," she asked, in a low, anxious voice, "do you think it is wrong to go to such parties? Are all the people in those rooms"—and she pointed in the direction from which the music they could distinctly hear, seemed to come—"doing wrong?"

"Nay," was the quiet answer. "I must not presume to answer that question, Miss Hamilton. I am not called upon to-night to sit on the judgment seat and condemn my brother. It is charity, not judgment, the Christian is required to exercise. And we must never forget, that as different substances reflect different colors, that yet all blend together in the pure, white light of the sun, so different minds take different views of the same subject; and some day, perhaps, we shall find that in the perfect truth there was room for all the views. Only," and the quiet voice grew very sweet in its earnestness, "this I must say: hearts that love the Master, and that are consecrated to him, can never wish to go where they would not dare to ask him to go with them, or to bless them in going, or where they know that his presence would be unwelcome, or where a word from him, or to him, would seem out of place."

Margery's question—for her—was answered forever.



"I am very sorry," she murmured. "I—I did mean to try always to do right."

"And, may I ask, is there any reason why you should not still try?" was the gentle reply she received.

Margery shook her head. "No, perhaps not," she said, sadly; "but I don't know. I seem to have got out of the way."

"Then," Mr. MacMillan said, kindly, "may I remind you of what is the safest thing for us to do when we are conscious of having got out of the way? Is it not to retrace our steps and take no rest until we are in it again?"

"But that is such a hard thing to do, sometimes," Margery said, hopelessly.

"Do you think so?" and Mr. MacMillan's smile was full of encouragement. "No, Miss Hamilton, you are wrong in that thought. The dear old pilgrim Professor Carter loves so well will show us the truth here. He found it hard, very hard, to journey when, in obedience to Mr. Worldly Wiseman, he went out of his way. But once again safe within the way, 'he went on with haste;' anxious, it is true, but unhindered until, 'in process of time, he got up to the gate.' We all wander and make mistakes, Miss Hamilton, but our Father's heart never grows weary of forgiving, and his hand is always stretched out to welcome us when we turn back to him."



Margery could not speak, but more than one tear dropped silently on the little book she was still holding.

"I must not detain you longer," Mr. MacMillan said soon. "Miss Hamilton, may I take back to Professor Carter the gratifying assurance that his little pilgrim still means to do and be all that he wishes?"

For the first time during his call Margery's soft eyes were raised frankly, though very humbly, to Mr. MacMillan's.

"Yes, if you think I will not disappoint him," she said, in a low voice.

"I feel very sure you will not be suffered to disappoint him," Mr. MacMillan gently answered. "The lamb that is apt to stray is the very one the shepherd most closely watches."

"Thank you," Margery said, gratefully. And then, as he extended his hand in farewell, she repeated, "Thank you for calling, Mr. MacMillan."

"I am thankful I was commissioned to do so," Mr. MacMillan pleasantly answered. "Good-by, Miss Hamilton. Professor Carter cannot wish more truly than I do that you may approve things that are excellent and hold fast that which is good."



## CHAPTER IV.

### FENCED IN.

“Now I saw in my dream that the highway, up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a wall. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.”—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

MARGERY felt no inclination after Mr. Mac-Millan's departure to return to the ball-room. She hastened to her own room, and no entreaties from Laura, who soon came to look for her, could induce her to leave it again that night.

“I have learned my lesson,” she humbly confessed to herself. “Reaching one hand up to heaven, while with the other I cling with all my strength to the world, can never make me happy. I believe there is but one way for a Christian to live, and that is, like King David, with ‘a whole heart’ to choose ‘the way of truth.’ ”

And during the few remaining days of her stay in Quantuck, Margery's life bore witness to the fact that she had chosen that way. The last days of the beautiful summer soon passed, and the



morning for her departure arrived. It was a September morning, full of the cool, indescribable brightness of the early autumn, and as the old stage that was to take them to the station rumbled away from the hotel, and they lost sight of the smiling faces that were watching them from the piazza, Margery and Laura sat back in their seats, half-sorry that their vacation was over and well aware that it did not leave them as it found them, but that in many respects they were changed to each other, and changed in the hopes and purposes of their lives. To each of those young girls, during that glad summer, the tender call had come,—

“My child, give me thine heart.”

And one had heeded and hastened to obey, but the other, like Bunyan's Mrs. Light-mind, had only said,—

“Come, put this kind of talk away.”

And through all the long, eventful years of their as yet unknown future, the influence of those solemn decisions would be silently, surely felt.

As the old stage disappeared around the corner, and the group on the piazza broke up, a lady who had only arrived in Quantuck the night before turned to a young girl near her.

“Who is that Margery Hamilton, Effie?” she asked. “Does she live in Mrs. Stanton's family?”

“Why no, Aunt Alice; how strange that you



should think so ! She has spent the summer here with Laura because they are great friends and go to the same school ; but she has a beautiful home on the Hudson, and her father is a very rich manufacturer ; David Hamilton, haven't you heard of him ? ”

“ Is he her father ? Yes, I know him, and Mrs. Hamilton, too. And so Margery is their daughter. Well, she is hardly what I should expect their daughter to be.”

“ Why, what would you expect her to be, Aunt Alice ? I don't know how she could be lovelier than she is, only she has taken some strict notions about being a Christian into her head lately, and I wish she would get over them ; they really make me uncomfortable sometimes, when I am with her.”

“ Strict notions has she ? That explains what I meant, Effie. She impressed me as thinking of something beside the dress and pleasure in which most of you young girls seem absorbed.”

“ Well, I hope Margery will have firmness enough to adhere to her ‘strict notions,’ but I fear the home to which she is going will have little tolerance for them.”

“ What kind of a home is it, Aunt Alice ? ”

“ A very beautiful one, Effie, and also a very worldly one. Her mother is a proud, fashionable woman, who lives for society ; her father is a de-



voted business man, who lives to accumulate money ; and her brother is a gay, young fop, who would almost as soon commit a crime as stand manfully up and say no, where fashionable society has once said yes. He lives to spend his father's wealth, and labors under the pitiful delusion that 'the grand old name gentleman' means a man who was never suspected of working or doing anything really useful. In such a home what do you think your friend will do with her 'strict notions?'"

"I don't know, Aunt Alice, but I think that, like my great-grandmother's dresses, I should lay them aside until the world was more ready to approve of them."

"Oh, Effie, Effie!" the older lady said, reprovingly, "I hope Margery's convictions of right are deeper than yours." And with these words Margery dropped out of the conversation, and almost out of the memories of her summer acquaintances.

At sunset of that same day a carriage stopped before a beautiful house on the banks of the Hudson, and Margery sprang out and ran quickly up the steps and into the arms of a lady who was waiting for her on the piazza.

"Mother, dear mother, you don't know how glad I am to see you again," the young girl said, joyfully. "I was glad to go away, but I am gladder still to come back."

"It is worth while to let young birds try their



wings occasionally," said a fine-looking, middle-aged man, who just then came up to Margery and kissed her affectionately ; " they know better how to prize the old nest when they come back to it."

" I know I prize this nest," Margery said, while her eyes roamed with great delight over the exquisitely-kept lawn, and then far off across the noble river rolling before them. " Father, how lovely it is here! I never knew before how beautiful the Hudson was."

" And I never knew before," said a gay voice behind her, " what a ' nut-brown maide ' my little sister was. Why, Margery, if color is any indication of health, you must be marvelously healthy."

" So I am," Margery declared, as she sprang to greet her brother. " I am both healthy and happy, Clifford," and, with a glad laugh, the light-hearted girl followed her mother into the house, and danced away to her own beautiful room.

" Mother," Margery said, a day or two after her return, as she sat alone with her mother, " I wish I need not go to boarding-school this year. Can't I stay home and have teachers come here? "

Mrs. Hamilton smiled as if the request pleased her. " Your father and I have already spoken of this," she said. " We would like to have you with us this winter, and we will see what can be



done about your lessons. I think it is certainly time you began to go a little into society."

"There is one thing more I want to speak of, mother," Margery said, a little timidly, reminded by her mother's last words that the time had come for her to acknowledge the change that had come over her heart and life; "I hope I have become a Christian this summer, and so it seems to me I ought to join the church."

"What!" Mrs. Hamilton said, more sharply than usual; "what did you say, Margery?"

"Only this, mother, that I hope I am a Christian, and think I ought to confess it before the world."

"You better prove that you really are one, first," Mrs. Hamilton coldly answered.

"But it seems to me, mother," Margery ventured to urge, "that to come out in that way is one of the best proofs I can give of my sincerity."

"I do not approve of young persons making professions whose importance they do not half comprehend," Mrs. Hamilton said, with emphasis. "There will be time enough, years from now, for you to join the church. At present you are too young to think of such a thing."

"I do not suppose I am too young to die," Margery said, softly.

"What do you mean?"

"This, mother: I am not too young to die,



and so I ought not to be too young to prepare for death ; and if I am old enough for that, why am I not old enough to acknowledge before the world that I believe in Christ and want to learn of him, and become like him ?”

Mrs. Hamilton looked sharply at her young daughter for a minute, and then turned from her, and for a little while appeared to be very busy in sorting her embroidery silks.

“May I do it, mother ?” Margery asked soon.

Mrs. Hamilton looked up impatiently. “Are you still harping on that subject, Margery ?” she said. “I thought I had answered you.”

“I did not understand that you gave me a decided answer, mother.”

“Then try to be intelligent enough to understand that I give you one now. I shall not consent to your joining the church. I have other plans for you.”

“Will you tell them to me, mother ? I do not know what they are.”

“That is of no consequence. You will know them when I am ready to reveal them,” was the haughty answer. “At present it is enough to say that I do not mean to allow you to do anything that will interfere with them.”

Margery made no reply. To prolong the conversation would only serve to strengthen her mother in her decision ; and with a deepening



conviction that for her there would be no gaining of the Christian's crown without the bearing of the Christian's cross, she went to her room to seek help from her Bible and from prayer.

The next day was the Sabbath. It was the custom in Mr. Hamilton's family for some of its members to attend church Sabbath mornings—as church-going Mr. Hamilton considered a very proper act—and then, after church, devote the remainder of the day to driving, calling, novel-reading and entertaining intimate friends.

Except that some of them went to church, and the fact that Mr. Hamilton did not attend to business, nor Mrs. Hamilton go shopping or add another bud or leaf to the piece of embroidery she always had on hand, there was nothing to indicate that the Sabbath was in any respect different from the other six days of the week.

Margery thought of this, that morning while dressing for church, and sorrowfully wished that life in her luxurious home was governed more by the precepts of the Bible and less by the mandates of the world. And as she knelt in prayer, she earnestly asked that she might have strength “to call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord.”

It was not until after church that she knew how much strength she would need really to call and keep it so.

“By the way,” Mrs. Hamilton said, as she leis-



urely sugared and sipped her coffee at lunch, "by the way, Margery, I forgot to tell you before, but Mrs. Stanton called yesterday and invited us to dine with her to-night—quite informally, of course—just ourselves and her nephew, Mr. Stevenson, and her own family I believe. And in the evening she said we would have a little music. Mr. Stevenson is very fond of music and Laura has given him a very flattering account of your singing and playing, and he is very anxious to hear you. And I hope," Mrs. Hamilton added with much emphasis, "that you will endeavor to do your best and not disappoint his expectations."

"But, mother," Margery said, desperately, "but, mother, this is Sunday."

"Very true. I am happy to say I do not require that information. I believe I am still capable of keeping the run of the days of the week. Pray, tell me what difference this being Sunday can make in this matter?"

Margery hesitated. "I would rather not spend it in just pleasing myself," she said timidly, in a moment.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton exchanged glances. The conversation of the day before had been faithfully reported by Mrs. Hamilton to her husband; and now, as he heard Margery's timid words, Mr. Hamilton turned quickly to her. "Then you may spend it in pleasing me," he said in a stern,



resolute voice. "It makes no difference by what name you call this day, Margery, I am going to Mrs. Stanton's and I command you to go with me."

It was useless to plead with her father when he spoke in that tone. Margery knew that well; and even if words would have been of any avail, they were out of her power. She could only wait in silence and keep back her tears until lunch was over and she was at liberty to go to her room.

"What shall I do? oh, what shall I do?" was the cry that went up from her troubled heart, as it has from myriads of troubled ones through all the ages of the past. "How can I live as a Christian ought, and yet have all my days alike, and spend them all in serving the world?"

Poor Margery! She could find no answer for that old, unanswerable question, and, throwing herself on her bed, she sobbed with all the passionate abandon of a young heart struggling with its first trouble.

"And what's the matter now, dearie?" said a kind voice presently, and Margery brushed away her tears, and looked up to see the compassionate face of the old housekeeper bending anxiously over her.

"O, Mrs. True," the sad girl sobbed, "I am in so much trouble!"

"Trouble," repeated the kind woman, whose



fifty years had given her a deeper insight into the meaning of that word than the girl before her had even dreamed of. "It is very little your young heart can know about trouble, dearie."

"It is trouble to me," Margery sighed, despairingly.

"So it is," responded the kind voice. "I declare I'd almost forgotten that even the youngest heart must know its own bitterness. What is it, Miss Margery, dear; can an old woman help you?"

Margery shook her head. "No," she sobbed; "I don't think any one can help me. Oh, Mrs. True, I am trying to be a Christian, and it is very hard."

Quietly the old housekeeper sat down on the bed, took the young girl in her arms, and stroked back her soft, damp hair.

"What makes it so hard?" she asked, tenderly.

"I do not know how I am to live in this world and yet do right," Margery answered in a sobbing voice.

"We will go by the King's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left," quoted Mrs. True, reverently, from the Bible, that for years had been truly a light unto her path. "It is a straight road you are called to walk in, dear child," she continued; "can't you keep in it?"

"It is very hard," Margery sadly insisted. "How



can I always tell what I ought to do, or where I ought to go?"

"The commandments make a wall all along the way," Mrs. True thoughtfully answered; "and you will find—if you look for them—a 'shall' or a 'shall not' to answer every question."

"But there is more than one commandment," Margery urged. "We are told to keep the Sabbath-day holy, and we are also told to obey our parents. Now, suppose you have to choose between those two commandments, and whichever one you keep, must break the other, what then?" and the troubled girl looked tearfully at Mrs. True.

"Nay, nay," was the prompt, cheerful answer. "You are in a fog of your own making now, my dear. The keeping of one of God's commandments never has required, and never will require, the breaking of another. If it seems so to you now, it is because you do not see what is really right and really wrong as clearly as you might, if you looked only through the sunshine of your Bible."

"But how am I to get out of the fog?" Margery asked; "how am I to decide what I ought to do, when, whichever way I turn, I feel afraid of doing wrong?"

"Forget those troublesome questions for a moment, and ask only how you can best honor God,"



Mrs. True gently advised. "There are many troubles and tangles in all our lives, Miss Margery, that would soon be smoothed and straightened if, with humble, loving hearts, our first wish was always to honor our Father in heaven."

"But it will not be honoring him for me to break either commandment," Margery said, mournfully.

"Then ask him to show you a way to keep both. Miss Margery, never, until we have tested God's power to help us to the utmost—and who has ever done that?—have we any right to complain of our inability to do what he commands."

"Margery!" called her father, just then, outside her door, "be ready to go to Mrs. Stanton's in half an hour."

Margery started up and went to the door, but her father was already descending the stairs, and in a moment she heard him enter the library. There was no longer time for tears or complaints, and slowly, with a beating heart, she followed her father down the stairs. With her hand on the door-knob she paused a second, while her silent prayer went up,—“Dear Lord, help me to honor thee, and show me how to keep thy commandments.” And then she opened the door and walked with soft, swift steps to her father's side.

"Father," she began, "may I speak to you a minute?"



"It must be for just a minute, then, Margery," Mr. Hamilton answered; "for the carriage will be here soon, and I see you are not yet ready."

"Must I get ready, father?" Margery asked, pleadingly, "when I would so much rather stay at home?"

"Why?"

The short question was sternly asked, and Margery's courage almost failed her as she answered,—

"Because, father—because—I am trying to be a Christian."

"What has that to do with your going to Mrs. Stanton's?"

Margery trembled, but she answered, brokenly,—

"I want—to keep—the Sabbath-day—holy."

"You seem to have forgotten that there is a fifth commandment as well as a fourth," Mr. Hamilton said, angrily.

"No, oh no, father, I have not forgotten it," Margery said, with great earnestness; "and I want—indeed, I do want—to do what you wish, always, in all things."

"Very well; I shall be satisfied if you do as I wish in this one thing, to-day. Go now, and get ready!"

For one moment Margery stood irresolute, and with contracted brow Mr. Hamilton watched her.

"Are you going to obey me, Margery?" he asked soon.



How was Margery to answer that question? Whether she said yes or no, it seemed to her sensitive conscience that she would still be doing wrong.

"Dear Jesus, help me!" she silently prayed; and even as the prayer went up, the power to speak the gentle words, that were more potent than swords, came down.

"Father," she said, in a sweet, tremulous voice; "won't you please let me stay home to-night? It will make me very unhappy to go, and—father—you have never made me unhappy—yet."

They were simple, innocent words, unprompted by art or cunning; but, irritated and angry though he was, Mr. Hamilton found it hard to resist their gentle appeal. It was very true that he had never yet, willingly, caused his child a moment's unhappiness; and it seemed to him now well-nigh impossible to utter the word that would cause her, instead of that gentle "yet," to say "until to-day."

Conscious that he was conquered, and yet still vexed, he looked at Margery for a moment and then said, severely,—

"If I never have made you unhappy, it by no means follows that I never shall, if you persist in this ridiculous way of thinking and acting. But for to-night——" He paused a minute, and then, having thought of a way by which he could



maintain his dignity, he added,—“As I think too highly of Mrs. Stanton’s hospitality to wrong it by claiming it for an unwilling guest, you can remain at home.”

“Thank you,” Margery said, gratefully. But then, as she saw the frown deepening on his face, she asked, timidly, “You are not displeased with me now ; are you, father ?”

Mr. Hamilton looked at her with dissatisfied eyes. Already he regretted yielding, and in no mood to be conciliated, he answered, sternly,—

“Yes ; I am both displeased with you and disappointed in you. But go now ; since solitude has such charms for you that you prefer it to the society of your best friends, go to your room and enjoy it.”

And, not daring to speak, Margery silently obeyed him.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE BURDEN DROPPED.

“He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross . . . So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders.”—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

“AND now what shall we do with her?” Mrs. Hamilton asked, anxiously, as, alone with her husband that night, they discussed Margery’s “peculiar” conduct.

“Send her back to school at once,” Mr. Hamilton answered. “If the influence of forty or fifty gay girls does not prove strong enough to overcome her solemn fancies, I shall be sadly disappointed.” And in consequence of this decision, the next week found Margery once more an inmate of Madame Girard’s school.

She was almost glad to be there, and away from the chilling atmosphere that had surrounded her lately in her own home; but the young girl’s heart was very heavy, and not even the lively greetings of her schoolmates could charm her out



of her sadness. Her father had parted from her with a few cold words that made her keenly conscious of the depth of his displeasure. Her mother had reproached her severely for what she was pleased to call her "ridiculous nonsense." Even her brother had contributed towards making her unhappy.

"Good-by, Margery," he said, carelessly. "I hope you will get these old-fashioned, puritanical notions out of your head soon. If you don't, I think when you come home again I'll go off—somewhere where I can have peace and happiness. You have managed pretty effectually to banish those two blessings from this house lately."

Margery's heart ached as she recalled those stinging words, and it ached still more when that first trying day at school was over and the hour came for retiring.

How she longed for the privacy of her own beautiful room at home! Here, in this crowded school, she was placed in a large chamber with Laura and two other girls. She could never hope to be alone now. Whatever she did, must be done with the consciousness that three pairs of bright, curious eyes were watching her, and that every departure from her usual course would surely be noticed and criticised.

She felt this deeply that night. It had been her custom of late to read a short passage in her



Bible before retiring ; but should she—could she do so now? She asked herself that question even while she was looking in her trunk for her Bible. When the book was found she still hesitated.

She had shared that room with those same girls for three years. In all that time there had never been a prayer offered in it, nor a chapter in the Bible read, save when their school duties imperatively demanded it—a sad, strange fact, perhaps, but still a fact. And now, after all she had endured at home, was it still her duty to do what would, without doubt, provoke comment and probably ridicule here? Couldn't she just repeat mentally some Bible verses that she could remember, and then say her prayers silently after she was snuggled away in bed?

She was sorely tempted to do so, and for a moment she faltered and her Bible dropped from her hand. Then came the solemn warning,—“Who-soever shall be ashamed of me and of my words,”—and grasping her Bible again, this time with both hands, as if she feared it might suddenly be snatched from her, Margery crossed the room and took a seat near the gas-light.

“Oh, Margery,” exclaimed one of the girls, as she stopped in the very act of unbraiding her hair to look at her, “have you a new book there? Won't you lend it to me? what is it?”



"My Bible," Margery said, in a low voice, in answer to that last question.

If she had said the lost sibylline leaves they had read of in their Roman histories the girls could hardly have been more surprised. Their surprise was, however, a great help to Margery, for it produced the desirable effect of keeping them quiet. They were not inclined to ask any more questions just then, and when her short reading was ended, Margery went softly to her bed and knelt down beside it.

It was a trial to do so, and it seemed impossible to pray and forget the six wondering eyes that were watching her; but from the depths of the girl's sad heart the humble prayer went up: "Lord, help me, and teach me to live as a Christian ought."

And then, strengthened by her very struggles, Margery dropped her tired head on her pillow, and forgot—for a little while—her troubles.

But that sweet forgetfulness only lasted a few hours, and with the dawn of the next day Margery opened her eyes and came back to real life, with all its needs, and trials, and temptations.

Her room-mates were still asleep, and after considering the matter a few minutes, Margery decided that it might be possible for her, by rising very early every morning, to obtain a little quiet time for her reading and prayer before the girls would be awake and conscious of her actions.



Cheered by that hope, she arose, and after dressing with the utmost caution, for fear of disturbing the sleepers, she found her Bible, and took her seat in a corner of the room where she fancied she would be somewhat shielded from observation.

She had a few sweet moments of undisturbed quiet, enough for her to find and rest her troubled heart upon the tender, unalterable promise of her heavenly Father: "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee unto the place which I have prepared."

An angel to keep her in the way !

"Oh," the poor child thought, "if I could only see him, how much easier it would be to trust and follow." Still, though sight might fail her, faith could rest upon that promise, and feel that it was sweet. And, with intense longing, Margery clung to it that morning.

She *was* in the way, and she meant, with all the will that she possessed, to stay in it. Yet it seemed to her a hard way, and she felt that a power, apart from, and stronger than herself, was needed to keep her in it.

If she could only see that angel and know that he was leading, how much easier it would be ! she sadly thought.

She was still musing over that wonderful promise, when the sudden restlessness and stir of the



girls warned her that her quiet hour, for that day, was over.

“What ! Margery, are you up so early ?” Laura exclaimed, as she sat up in her bed and looked at her. “And reading, too, I declare. Tell me, is that the same book you were so much interested in last night ?”

“Yes,” Margery reluctantly answered.

“Well, you do mean to set us a good example this term, if you never did before, don’t you ?”

Margery made no reply ; she only bent lower over her book, and tried to forget the scornful eyes that were watching her, and for a moment or two Laura was silent ; but soon she called,—

“Girls, come, too much reading isn’t good for any one. Let’s get up and put a stop to Margery’s.”

The girls were all wide awake immediately, and ready for any mischief. They were not usually unkind, and they probably could not have told what motives influenced their conduct that morning ; but they were thoughtless and careless ; they did not want, as Laura sarcastically said, “a saint in their room.” Then Laura was always their acknowledged leader. So when she called them now they were ready to obey her.

They danced around Margery as they dressed, and teased her with foolish remarks, and annoyed her with ridiculous questions, until, finding it im-



possible to read, with a weary sigh she closed her book.

"Please do not talk to me now," she pleaded, "I want to be quiet a little while."

"Why do you want to be quiet?" It was Laura who spoke, and with an imploring face Margery turned to her.

"You know why, Laura," she said, gently. "You have not forgotten last summer and Professor Carter, have you?"

"If I have not, I mean to," Laura said, in a sharp voice, "and I mean that you shall, too. Margery, you really are too nonsensical for people blessed with common sense to endure you. If you were sick—in a consumption, for instance—it might be worth while for you to act as you do. But as it is, it is simply absurd. And I will just tell you the truth; I saw your mother and Clifford two days ago. They called here and told me about you and I promised—and I intend to keep my promise—to do all I could to get your disagreeable notions out of your head. We don't believe much in fanatics in this nineteenth century, let me tell you."

"You do believe in Christians, though, Laura, don't you?" Margery asked, sadly.

"Christians? I don't know. It depends upon the kind of Christian you mean. I believe in the comfortable sort, who do as other people do, and



who are not all the time preaching sermons by their actions, if not by their words."

"I do not want to preach," Margery said, in a troubled voice, "but I do want to do right."

"Then the sooner you stop being so ridiculous, and consent to do as your parents and Clifford wish, the sooner your want will be satisfied. Come, Margery, I do not want to quarrel with you, but I give you fair warning; if you do not throw your solemn fancies to the winds and act like a sensible girl, you will receive no sympathy from me."

Poor Margery! she felt just then as if, for her, there was no sympathy anywhere in the wide world. It appeared very strange to the discouraged girl, that just when she was trying hardest to do her duty, all things should seem to turn against her. She found no pity, she sadly thought, on earth, and no help seemed to come from heaven. And when she recalled her morning reading, she was tempted, in the bitterness of her undisciplined heart, to believe that the "angel" had forsaken her, and left her to tread her toilsome path alone.

The day that followed that trying morning was full of trials, but it was over at last; and in the early twilight Margery stood by the school-room window looking out on the crowded street with eyes that plainly saw little of what was passing before them. Her sad expression touched and in-



terested one of the teachers who just then happened to look towards her.

"What is the matter, Margery?" she asked, as she went to the window, and laid her hand kindly on the young girl's hair.

Margery turned and showed to the pleasant eyes that were watching her a very sober, unhappy face.

"I don't know, Miss Woodward," she said, in a tired, indifferent voice, "I don't know that it is anything new. I believe I am dull—that's all."

"Dull, and only eighteen," Miss Woodward answered, with a smile. "Things must truly be sadly amiss when a young girl like you complains of dullness. Were you ever in my room, Margery? I am just going there. Suppose you come, too, and make me a little visit before study hour."

Margery's sober face brightened. "Thank you, Miss Woodward," she said, gratefully; "if you will take me, I would rather go with you than do anything else."

"Come, then." And without more words Miss Woodward led the way to her pleasant room.

It was warm and still and cozy, and with a sigh of relief Margery dropped into the easy chair Miss Woodward offered her and looked around.

"How pleasant this room is!" she said, "and you have it all to yourself, Miss Woodward, don't you? I wish it wasn't wicked to be envious."



"Unfortunately it is," Miss Woodward said, cheerfully; "so, my dear, you must put that naughty feeling out of your heart at once. But tell me, Margery, aren't you pleasantly situated here? I thought you were very fond of your room-mates, particularly of Laura Stanton."

"I always have been," Margery answered, in a slow, deliberate voice, as if she were considering and trying to decide how much she really did care for her room-mates, "and I think I am still. But—I do not feel about things just as I used, Miss Woodward."

Miss Woodward did not reply to Margery's bit of confidence at once. As if to take time for thought, she went to her window and lowered her shade; then turned up the gas and straightened the books on her table. And when all was done she came back to her seat and carefully studied Margery's downcast face for a few moments without speaking. Presently she said: "Things? what things do you mean, Margery?"

Margery turned at that question and looked at Miss Woodward more attentively than she ever had before.

She saw a sweet, thoughtful face, bright with the sunshine of a soul that had passed through many trials, but that through them all had kept its faith in God's promises unweakened, its hope in a glad hereafter undimmed. It was a face that



seemed to promise help as well as sympathy, and Margery trusted it at once.

"Miss Woodward," she began, "I do not want to be rude, but will you let me ask you a question? I do long to know some good people—Are you a Christian?"

"Yes, Margery."

How quiet and confident that answer was!

Margery almost wondered that Miss Woodward dared to be sure. "I hope so," would have seemed much more humble, and yet how beautiful it was to be free from doubt! The girl's eyes filled, and for a few moments there was a deep, but sweet silence in the little room.

"Is it my turn to catechise now?" Miss Woodward asked, gently, after waiting in vain for Margery to speak again. "Margery, dear, may I ask you that same question? Are you a Christian?"

Very humble and sad was Margery's answer. "I don't know, Miss Woodward, but—I—hope so."

Miss Woodward left her chair and going to Margery, stooped down and gave her one or two gentle kisses,—kisses so full of love and sympathy that Margery was cheered and comforted at once, and looked at her new friend with a brighter face than she had worn since her return to school.

"Where do you find that doubt, Margery?" Miss Woodward asked presently.



"Doubt?" Margery echoed; "what doubt, Miss Woodward?"

"The doubt that makes you so uncertain. Why are you not sure that you are a Christian, Margery? Don't you know that this is the Christian's most precious privilege—to know and believe the love that God hath toward him?"

It was hard for Margery to answer that question, but she struggled to do so.

"I do not feel good enough to be sure of that—yet," she said, soberly. "I do so many wrong things that I know God cannot be pleased with me; and I am afraid to depend too surely upon his love until I am really better and more deserving than I am now."

Before replying to those sad words, Miss Woodward drew her chair closer to Margery and took the weeping girl in her arms.

"Oh, Margery, Margery," she said, in a tone full of tender reproof, "you dear, blind child, are you, too, misled as so many others have been? Are you, too, trying to win and deserve, as a reward of merit, what is offered to you as a free and priceless gift? *Afraid to feel sure of God's love*—Margery," and Miss Woodward's voice was broken with tears, "how can you do my Father and yours such cruel wrong, such bitter injustice?"

"I am so far from being what I ought to be



that I feel unworthy and far away from—*him*,” Margery whispered, humbly.

Again there was a brief silence in that pleasant room, broken soon by Miss Woodward’s low, sweet voice, as, sentence by sentence, she repeated: “But when he was yet a *great way off*,—are you farther away than that, Margery?—his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

“Margery,” Miss Woodward whispered, after waiting a little while for those wonderful words to do their work, “Margery, you believe in Christ. You know he never said a word that was not true. Can you not, then, believe in this precious revelation—he himself gives us—of his Father’s love?”

“Yes, I do. I do believe in it,” Margery whispered back; “but, Miss Woodward, I must do something myself first, mustn’t I, before I can claim that love for my own?”

“I do not know of anything, dear, except to accept that love, and let it do its work in drawing from you an answering love,” Miss Woodward said, with sweet seriousness.

Margery turned, and for a few moments carefully watched Miss Woodward’s face.

“Why, Miss Woodward,” she insisted, “there must be something more. You know I must not be now just what I always have been. And oh,”



she added, with a mournful sigh, "since I have tried to be a Christian, I have had so much trouble. I think—yes, I do truly think, Miss Woodward—that it is just the hardest work in the world to make and keep ourselves good."

"I do not doubt it, Margery. Indeed, I believe I should even go farther than you, and say it is not only hard, but impossible."

What did Miss Woodward mean? Margery looked at her with curious, searching eyes, but smiles and tears were strangely mingled in the sweet face before her, and, with all her searching, Margery was no wiser.

"But you know, Miss Woodward, it is a work that we must do," she said, in a solemn voice.

"No, Margery; I do not know any such thing."

Once more, with questioning eyes, Margery looked at her new friend, and then, with a sob, hid her face against the arm that was folded around her.

"I do not know what you mean," she confessed, "but I feel as if you possessed some beautiful secret that would make me as happy as you are, if I only knew it. Won't you tell it to me?"

Miss Woodward's lips rested for a second on the young girl's brow, and her arms drew her closer; then she said, "Margery, you make me think of Bunyan's pilgrim, who 'could not go as fast as he



would by reason of the burden that was on his back.' Did you ever read of him, dear?"

"Not much; only a little."

"Then, take my advice, and read a 'little' more. With the exception of your Bible, you will find few books that will help you more. But let me tell you about that burden, Margery. You know what it was, don't you?—the painful sense of sin; the deep, humiliating consciousness of his own unworthiness. It troubled and hampered him, dear, and hindered him in his progress, and, with all his efforts, he could not rid himself of it, until,"—and the speaker's voice thrilled with a tender joy,—“in the course of his pilgrimage, he came to a place where ‘stood a cross.’ And, Margery, as ‘he came up with that cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back,’ and he—‘saw it no more.’”

"Do you understand it, dear?" Miss Woodward asked, soon, for Margery had neither spoken nor stirred in several minutes.

"I think—I do."

"Then tell me, Margery, let me know what it means to you."

Margery raised her head, and, perhaps, no one in all her young life had ever seen her face look as pure and beautiful as it did just then.

"It means this to me," she said, with a grave, sweet simplicity. "I never understood it fully



before. It seems to have come to me this evening, Miss Woodward, since you have been talking. It is God's great love for us, and not what we do for him, that saves us. It is losing sight of ourselves, and seeing Christ, that gives us courage to believe that our sins are forgiven and covered. And"—she stopped a moment as if uncertain how to proceed.

"Go on, Margery, let me have the whole."

Margery's smile in answer was a little tremulous; but her voice was clear and firm as if the new faith and hope that had entered her soul were making her strong in every part.

"I don't know that I can express it plainly," she said, "but it seems to me I can see this truth written now all over my life. I cannot—with all my efforts—make myself good. I cannot—no matter how hard I try—make myself delight in self-denials or sacrifices. Nor can I—in my own strength—ever find it easy or pleasant to renounce the things of the world, that my Bible tells me Christ does not love, and to which I know I ought not to cling. By no struggles of my own can I ever do this. But when I once feel truly in my heart how much God loves me; when I once, with the eye of faith, see Christ as he really is, then self-denials will change into pleasures. I will feel that sacrifices—for him—are privileges, and the things Christ does not love will be easy for me



to renounce, for I will not love them either, and I will not want to go anywhere where I think he would not be willing to go with me. Am I right, Miss Woodward?" And with a gush of sweet tears, Margery hid her face once more.

"Yes, dear Margery," was the the tender answer. "I think—like Christian—you have—'come up with the cross.'"



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SPRING AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL.

"I beheld, then, that they all went on till they came to the foot of the hill Difficulty, at the bottom of which was a spring. . . . Christian now went to the spring, and drank thereof to refresh himself."—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

THE joy and comfort that came to Margery from that talk with Miss Woodward sank deep into her heart, and became an abiding influence in her life.

"Now I can go on," she thought, and from that hour, though often she walked with faltering steps, her course was onward. No longer trying "to make and keep herself good," but dropping that hopeless task into his hands who was able to keep all she committed to him, Margery, like Christian, "grew glad and lightsome," and "went on singing."

Not that the thorns were all removed from her path. In her heavenly Father's wise and loving plan for her they were still left to prove her; to keep her ever conscious of her own weakness and ever looking to him for strength.



Her parents never failed, in their letters and visits, to reproach her for what they considered her obstinacy and disobedience. Her brother, whenever she saw him, was sure to pain her with his frivolity and undisguised contempt for all that she held most sacred, and Laura, who had always been her dearest friend and inseparable companion, seemed now like a stinging nettle in her path, losing no opportunity to irritate and wound her with cutting words and slighting actions. Life in that fashionable boarding-school was much like life in other places, commending conformity to the world as sensible and advisable, and pronouncing the following of Christ in literal, child-like obedience, an unwise, fanatical proceeding.

Yes, there were many things in Margery's daily life—as in all our lives—that, according as she used them, would be either helps or hindrances in her journey heavenward. Margery was learning—slowly, perhaps, but surely—to make them all helps. All Laura's sarcastic speeches and her friends' unjust reproaches only taught her more of the preciousness of prayer and of the all-sufficiency of Christ, and helped to educate her in the beautiful graces of patience, humility and meekness.

In Miss Woodward she found a kind, true friend, who was always ready to aid her with sympathy, advice and helpful words; and in her



pleasant room Margery often found the quiet and repose she could not enjoy elsewhere. And so the days and weeks went by, until December came with its glad preparations for Christmas, and bright eyes grew brighter and young hearts gayer as they looked forward to the holiday vacation.

Margery was to go home for the holidays; and her mother had written that she would find the house full of company and must prepare for a very gay visit. Even while she longed to go, Margery shrank from the ordeal to which she feared her parents meant to subject her. But she could not help herself. She could only go humbly and prayerfully on her way, doing as well as she could the duty of to-day, and leaving the to-morrow and its burdens with him, who when the burdens came, would give the strength to bear them.

We can only propose, and after all our planning, it is God who in the end directs our steps. Margery was to learn now that in her Christmas holidays, as in all the other days of her life, her heavenly Father was better to her than all her fears—better even than all her hopes.

It was only two days to Christmas, and Margery was expecting to go home the next morning, when a telegram came from Mr. Hamilton.

All their plans were changed. Clifford was sick with a contagious fever, and on no account



would Mr. Hamilton allow Margery to come home. She must remain at the school.

“Remain here,” Miss Woodward said when she heard Margery’s sad news. “My dear, I can propose something better than that. Go home with me.”

Margery smiled through her tears. “Oh, if I only could,” she said, wishfully.

“I do not believe there is any law of the Medes and Persians to forbid your going,” Miss Woodward answered. “And I will telegraph at once and ask your father’s permission.”

Mr. Hamilton’s answer was soon received. Margery might displease him, but she was none the less the darling of his heart; and the thought of her lonely life at the great, empty school during the holidays had troubled him very much. He believed that all Madame Girard’s teachers were worthy of respect and confidence, and he was glad to avail himself of Miss Woodward’s invitation and to trust Margery to her care.

“So the obstacles are all cleared out of our way,” Miss Woodward said, after reading the pleasant telegram. “Now, Margery, if we have any last arrangements—such as packing our trunks and consulting with Santa Claus—to make, we must attend to them without delay, for we have a long journey before us, and must start early to-morrow morning if we mean to be at



home in time to hang up our stockings on Christmas eve."

The next day was crisp and fair, and at an early hour—as Miss Woodward had said—they took their seats in the train bound for Bellefield—a beautiful town, peacefully nestled down among the old hills that surround it on every side and that—like the fairies around the cradle in the old story—seem to shut it in from all harm.

The cars were full of travelers, all burdened with mysterious-looking packages and boxes. And the memory of Bethlehem's Christmas song seemed to gladden their eyes and sweeten their smiles and soften all their thoughts and actions.

Margery enjoyed every hour of her long journey, but the pleasantest part of the day came at its close, when, in the dusk of the early evening, Miss Woodward led her into the quiet home where her mother and sister were waiting to welcome them. The greetings she received were so warm and sincere that if Margery had felt any secret doubts of her welcome, they were at once dispelled and banished.

"I feel at home already, Miss Woodward," she said, brightly, as, up-stairs in Miss Woodward's pleasant room, she was removing her wraps.

"Do you?" Miss Woodward kindly answered; "then prove it, my dear, by doing while here just as you like. That is what my mother always



wants her girls to do, so long as they only like to do right."

"It must be very easy to be good and do right here," Margery said, with a curiously mingled smile and sigh.

"I hope you will find it so," Miss Woodward said, kindly. "The ease with which we do right in this world depends, I think, Margery, not so much upon the place we are in, as upon the love that fills our hearts. There's a wise little sermon for you for Christmas eve," she added, laughingly, as she smoothed Margery's soft hair; "and now, if you are ready, we will go down and see what our mother and sister are doing."

"You have come just in time, Kathie," said Mrs. Annie Woodward, when, a little later, they were all gathered around the cozy tea-table. "Mrs. MacMillan gives a Christmas party to-morrow evening, and we are all invited."

"I am very glad I am in time," Miss Woodward answered. "Margery, Mrs. MacMillan is one of my dearest friends. I want you to know her, and I shall be delighted to have an opportunity to introduce you to her to-morrow night."

"But I am not invited," Margery said, soberly.

"No, but I am, fortunately; and in Mrs. MacMillan's creed, her friends' friends are always her friends. You will find yourself warmly welcomed, my dear, and you must go if it is only to please me."



"I would do something much harder than that to please you," Margery said, gratefully.

"Good little girl," Miss Woodward answered. "Mother, you see I have at least one obedient pupil at Madame Girard's. By the way, why are not Cuckoo, Bobolink and Robin, and our good brother and sister here to-night?"

"They will come over a little later," Mrs. Woodward replied. "Their stockings are to be hung in our fire-place to-night, and they have already had a great many serious discussions as to whether our chimney is large enough for Santa Clause to come down comfortably."

"If he cannot come comfortably," Miss Woodward said, laughingly, "he will have to endure a little crowding, and then his experience will only be a fair type of the inconvenience most of us have to submit to at this season. Mother, I think if there is ever a time in our lives when we feel, with Rosamond, that the 'silver paper won't cover the basket,' it is at Christmas, when we want to buy and give so much. Yet, a little crowding here, and stretching there, sometimes helps wonderfully, and I have no doubt that Santa Claus knows that as well as we do."

"Have you been growing philosophical, my dear Kathie?" said a pleasant voice in the doorway, and with a glad cry Miss Woodward sprang up to greet the new-comer.



"Oh, Mark!" she said, "you don't know how glad I am to see you."

"Perhaps I can guess," was the laughing yet tender answer. "A fellow feeling sometimes makes us wondrous wise, my dear Kathie."

Miss Woodward's eyes were very bright, though they shone through an April mist of sunshiny tears.

"Margery," she said, as she turned with thoughtful kindness to Margery, "here is another new friend for you, dear : my brother, the Rev. Mark Woodward. And now," she asked eagerly, as soon as her introduction was over, "where are the birdlings?"

"Here, and here, and here," cried three laughing voices ; and from behind the open door rushed three bright-eyed, curly-headed little girls, who threw themselves into Miss Woodward's arms and almost devoured her with kisses.

"Oh, Aunt Kathie!" cried one of them, "we thought you never would come. It has been the longest time to Christmas!"

"Yes, I dare say, my pet ; it takes our good times a long while to come to us sometimes, but they always come at last, don't they?" And Kathie turned with a loving, questioning look to her brother, who was standing beside her with his hand resting on her shoulder.

"To those who wait patiently—yes," he said, in a low voice meant for her alone.



In the pretty, impulsive way, that seemed to belong to her in her own home, Miss Kathie bent and laid her cheek for a moment against his hand. "And now," she said, as she sprang up, "where is the mamma?"

"She's home," said the oldest girl very demurely, though her eyes fairly danced with some pleasant secret she was trying to conceal.

"And why is that, Bobolink? Why didn't she come, too, when I want to see her so much?"

"Oh, Aunt Kathie!" cried Cuckoo, "that's the very bestest part of it all, and——"

"Oh, Aunt Kathie, I can't wait; I must tell you; we've got a s'prise for you at our house," laughed Robin.

"Let's all tell her together," cried Bobolink. And then three pairs of little arms went round Miss Woodward's neck, and three little rose-bud mouths struggled to reach her ear, and three glad, innocent child voices whispered loudly,—

"We've got something beau-ti-ful for you at our house, Aunt Kathie. We've got——" and then there was a pause, as if the important secret must not be too quickly told.

"A bird of Paradise?" Miss Woodward said as well as she could for the choking to which she was patiently submitting.

"No, something better than that," they laughed. "We've got, Aunt Kathie, a real, live, baby



brother at our house, and he is your Christmas present."

"My Christmas present, you blessed birdies!" Miss Woodward said, with a laugh and a sob. "Well, I'm going straight over to see him. You need not expect me to wait until morning, especially when I know I couldn't find him in my stocking. Come, Margery, you must go with us; it is only across the street." And in a few minutes the laughing little party stood in the parsonage.

And so all through that pleasant evening the Christmas-bells rang their gentle chimes of peace and good-will in the Christian home in which Margery found herself so sincerely and warmly welcomed.

In all her life she had never before seen such a home, and Margery felt that it was, indeed, good to be in it. And when, late in the evening, the hour came for rest, it was very sweet to listen while Mrs. Woodward read the story, forever old and yet forever new, of the shepherds' watch and the angels' chant; and, sweeter yet, to kneel around that glad home altar, and, with a full heart, offer thanks for the sacred Christmas gift, that faith whispered was truly bestowed on her,—the gift of a Saviour who was Christ the King.

It all tended to gladden, and yet, at the same time, subdue Margery. Miss Woodward, when she bent over her to give her a good-night kiss, was



not much surprised to feel that her cheeks were wet with tears, nor to hear her broken whispers,—

“Oh, Miss Kathie”—for Margery had already adopted the home name—“I’d give everything in the world, if I had it, for a home like yours.”

Tender, sympathizing kisses answered her first, and then Miss Kathie said softly, as she heard Margery’s stifled sobs,—

“Hush, dear, our homes are chosen for us by a Father who makes no mistakes, and whatever they may be, we can always in them find room for joyful service, for thanksgiving, and”—while the gentle voice fell a little lower—“for faith’s sweet work of trust. That, dear Margery, is all that, as loving children, we need to ask.”

“Wish you a Merrie Christmas!” childish voices were calling through the house, when, in the pink flush of the early dawn, Margery awoke the next morning; and in quiet and glad content the hours of that Christmas day went by, until the twilight shadows began to gather, and Miss Woodward reminded Margery that it was time to dress for Mrs. MacMillan’s party.

“It was not to be a fashionable affair,” Miss Kathie explained; “only a pleasant gathering of old friends and neighbors.” Such Margery found it, when, an hour or two later, she entered Mrs. MacMillan’s house.

It was an old-fashioned country house, such as



we now and then stumble upon in some of the world's quiet corners, where the Queen Anne craze has not set every one, if not to building new houses, at least to remodeling the old ones. The low, wide rooms were all thrown open that night; great oaken fires were blazing in the large fire-places, and everywhere a sweet, subtle influence, as intangible as the perfume of a flower, and yet as penetrating, seemed to say that the old house was in the truest sense a home.

Margery's first thought, as she entered the warm, bright parlor was, "Oh, what a lovely room!" but she forgot the room the next moment, when a silvery-haired, sweet-voiced lady turned from welcoming Miss Kathie to speak to her.

"Miss Margery Hamilton," she repeated after Miss Kathie, with a curious accent of surprise and pleasure in her tone. "My dear, I am very glad to see you. Miss Kathie's friends are always welcome, but I do not believe she could have brought me one to-night more welcome than yourself."

Miss Woodward smiled. "I was looking out the true meaning of the word introduction the other day," she said, while Margery, with her hand still in Mrs. MacMillan's warm clasp, stood quietly beside her; "it comes from two Latin words that mean to lead within."

"Where soul can speak to soul," Mrs. MacMillan softly suggested.

"Yes," Miss Kathie went on. "I am afraid, in



this cold world, it will not be my privilege to give many such introductions ; but I did want to give one, and, possibly, two to-night." And then, with a sudden change of voice, she asked, "Isn't Archie here this evening?"

Mrs. MacMillan's smile was a little sad. "Not yet," she answered ; "I hoped he would arrive this morning ; but, instead, I received a telegram saying he was unavoidably detained for a few hours. He may come to-night, but, probably, not until to-morrow. Miss Kathie,"—as new guests appeared in the door,—“will you keep Miss Margery under your wing, and give her a home-feeling here until I am free to do it myself?" And, with a smile that set Margery to thinking of several things, Mrs. MacMillan left them.

"What are you dreaming about, Margery?" Miss Woodward asked, a little later, as she turned from speaking to some old friends, and noticed the young girl's thoughtful face.

"I am so puzzled!" Margery exclaimed. "I do not understand it at all."

"You look so. Well, Margery, there are a great many puzzles in life that you probably never will understand ; but, perhaps, this one can be easily explained. Suppose you tell it to me."

Margery's perplexed face did not change. "I am thinking—" she began, slowly, and then



abruptly concluded with : "Miss Kathie, I met a Mr. MacMillan last summer."

It was Miss Kathie's turn now to look puzzled. "You met a Mr. MacMillan?" she repeated. "Why, where were you last summer?"

"At the sea-shore—at a place called Quantuck. And I am wondering"—Margery proceeded to explain—"if that Mr. MacMillan and this Mrs. MacMillan can be any relation. He was very good," she added.

Miss Kathie laughed a little. "And you think that goodness ought to belong to goodness, do you?" she asked. "In the millennium it doubtless will, Margery; but I am afraid that in this case it does not. Mrs. MacMillan has a son, and, like the Mr. MacMillan you met, 'he is very good;' but he spent last summer in Europe with an invalid uncle, and though I have known of his doing a great many things I do not believe any one else could do, still I imagine that to be in two places at once would exceed even his ability."

"Kathie, Kathie Woodward," said one of Miss Woodward's friends just then, "we are going to play blind-man's-buff in the next room. Won't you and Miss Hamilton join us?"

"Yes," Miss Woodward readily answered. "Come, Margery."

It was a new game to Margery. "I have never played it," she said, with a secret wish



that Miss Woodward would let her ignorance excuse her.

But Miss Kathie was in no mood to do that. "It is one of those pleasant things, then, to which I am glad to introduce you," she said, playfully. "But look well to your ways, my dear, for if the blind-man catches you, I am afraid there will be no escaping that handkerchief."

There was no escaping it, as, a little while after, Margery regretfully found.

There was no help for her : she was caught, and she must submit to the penalty and be blind-folded ; and soon she was groping about the room in a fruitless effort to catch the laughing players, who always seemed to be just within her reach, and yet never failed to elude and get beyond her.

She was growing a little hopeless of ever catching any one, and was making a desperate push for a certain corner where she fancied she heard whispering, when a door at the opposite end of the room opened, and the quick, laughing rush towards it seemed to say that something at once unexpected and pleasant had happened. Margery waited a few moments, but no one came to explain the cause of the excitement ; she could understand nothing from the buzz of the merry voices, and, a little doubtful of the propriety of removing her bandage, she slowly groped her way down the room.



"Look out!" said some one at her approach; and then there was another laughing scurry, and poor Margery dived frantically at this and that dodging figure until, suddenly, to her great content, her hand grasped a coat-sleeve.

"Oh, I've caught somebody," she said, with a long-drawn breath of relief.

"You certainly have," Miss Woodward said, merrily; "guess who, Margery."

The room was just then very still, and yet Margery had an intuitive consciousness that every one was laughing; and she had also the odd conviction that her captive had raised his free arm as if to hush them. Vainly, in her embarrassment, she tried to find a name.

"Is it Mr. Woodward?" she asked, doubtfully, at last.

There was another laugh at this; but then the arm Margery was grasping gently released itself, a kind hand removed the bandage from her weary eyes and a pleasant voice said,—

"We won't require impossibilities; but what the blind cannot tell, perhaps the seeing can." And with a little laughing gesture of submission, the speaker waited quietly before Margery.

With a shy, pretty grace, she looked up at him. The room was very bright with the great fire, whose red light was playing on the pictured walls and deepening the color in Margery's cheeks and



the golden brown tints of her hair, while it brought out in bold relief her captive's smiling face.

Who was he? Not Mr. Woodward, she was sure of that; but was he any one she had been introduced to that evening and ought to recognize? The pleasant eyes seemed very familiar, as she glanced up at them; but Margery tried in vain to name their owner, and with a little despairing shake of her head, she looked at Miss Woodward.

"My memory is better than my captor's, it seems," the gentleman said, in a low, laughing voice. "Miss Kathie, won't you introduce me?"

"The Rev. Archibald MacMillan, Miss Hamilton," Miss Kathie said, demurely; but then both her voice and manner changed.

"Oh, Archie," she said, joyously, "you don't know how glad we are that you are home to-night."

Mr. MacMillan's smile was as bright as Miss Kathie's, as he answered, "It is one of the cases, then, in which want of knowledge does not occasion want of sympathy, for I, too, am very glad to be at home to-night."

And as with these words he moved to speak to another old friend, Margery availed herself of the opportunity to escape from the smiling group that was gathering about him, and going to the fire, she stood there watching, with dreamy eyes, the glowing coals.



Yes, it was the same Mr. MacMillan she met at Quantuck; was she glad or sorry to meet him again? She was still considering that question when some one beside her asked,—

“Are quarrels ever allowable at Christmas-time, Miss Hamilton?” and she looked up to meet again Mr. MacMillan’s laughing eyes.

Margery was puzzled; but the odd question must be answered; so she said,—

“I cannot think of any good reason for a quarrel to-night, Mr. MacMillan.”

“Can you not? Then I suppose I must resist the strong inclination I feel to quarrel with you for having forgotten me, Miss Hamilton.”

The color in Margery’s face grew brighter; but she answered with simple truthfulness: “I had not forgotten, but I was very much surprised; for when I asked Miss Kathie, she said you were not Mr. MacMillan.”

Perhaps Margery’s explanation lacked clearness, but nevertheless Mr. MacMillan understood her.

“Miss Kathie’s word is not to be disputed usually,” he said, with a smile; “but in this case I cannot allow her to deny my identity, and I therefore affirm that I am Mr. MacMillan.”

“Then, Archie,” Miss Kathie exclaimed, “please substantiate that affirmation by explaining how you could possibly be in two places at once. You were in Europe; how could you be in Quantuck?”



“Easily. I went to Quantuck for just one Sabbath immediately after my return from Europe. Perhaps you did not know it,”—and both face and voice were serious now as Mr. MacMillan looked at Miss Woodward,—“but Hugh Trinot was then at Quantuck. He was just recovering from a severe illness and was trying what the sea air and baths could do for him; and at Professor Carter’s request I went down there to see him.”

Miss Woodward’s whole expression changed, and Margery had never seen her look as sad as she did, for one moment, when she slowly said, “No—I—did not—know it.” It was but for a moment. Then, whatever had occasioned her sadness, she resolutely banished it.

“Well,” she said, brightly as ever, “your explanation must be pronounced satisfactory, I suppose; but now, as Miss Rosa Dartle would say, I only ask for information,’ and I wish some one would tell me why you were not a little more surprised at meeting Margery here to-night. You had no reason to expect it.”

“I beg your pardon. I always expect pleasant things, especially at Christmas, and then—I had just seen my mother.”

“Oh! And she gave you a list of all her guests, I suppose?”

“Hardly. She mentioned a few,—yourself and Miss Hamilton, among others.”



“And by what law of association—I wish some one would tell me, to quote Miss Dartle again—did you arrive at the conclusion that the Miss Hamilton under my protection and the Miss Hamilton you met at Quantuck were one and the same?”

Miss Woodward had not seen the meeting between Mrs. MacMillan and her son, nor heard the mother's voice when she said, “Archie, I hardly know why, but I feel quite sure that the Miss Hamilton you were so much interested in last summer is here to-night.” And so, perhaps, she had good cause for her curiosity; but evidently Mr. MacMillan had no intention of gratifying it.

With a little laugh he said, teasingly, “Do you remember your old song, ‘Wouldn't You Like to Know,’ Kathie?”

And then, turning again to Margery, he said, “Miss Hamilton, if (as I hope) I have succeeded in proving, beyond question, that ‘I be I,’ will you let me take you where I can have the pleasure of breaking bread with you?”

“That is a dangerous request for you to grant, Margery,” Miss Woodward said, as Mr. MacMillan was leading Margery and herself to the supper-room. “Breaking bread with Archibald MacMillan is, in his meaning, the same as agreeing to a treaty of peace or friendship, and if you are beguiled into doing that, my dear, I warn you that



you can never dare say no, when he says yes, to any question."

Margery's laugh, in its happy freedom from all coquetry and self-consciousness, was a pleasant thing to hear.

"Won't I dare to ask a question, either?" she said. "Because if I won't, I want to stop right here and ask one now. Mr. MacMillan, please tell me, have you seen Professor Carter lately? Is he well?"

"Very well. I saw him only a few days ago."

"Are we never coming to the end of this book of revelations!" Miss Woodward exclaimed. "Margery Hamilton, do you mean to tell me you know my uncle, Professor Carter?"

"Your uncle!" Margery repeated, in surprise. "Yes, I know him—a little—Miss Kathie."

Perhaps something in the tone of her voice suggested, to one of her listeners, that Margery would rather not be questioned further just there about her acquaintance with Professor Carter, and, with some playful remark to Miss Woodward, Mr. MacMillan adroitly changed the conversation.

"Miss Kathie," Mrs. MacMillan said, when, some time later, Miss Woodward and Margery were bidding her good-night, "I know you are hardly ready to visit outside friends yet, and so I waive my claim upon you until your mother has seen more of you; but, if she is not too tired, will



you lend this little girl to me for a while to-morrow? I would like to know her better, and will send for her early in the afternoon, if she will come. Will she?" And Mrs. MacMillan turned smilingly to Margery.

Joyfully Margery accepted the kind invitation, and joyfully, the next afternoon, she prepared for her visit, and then seated herself in the window to watch for Mrs. MacMillan's messenger.

"Miss Kathie," she said soon, "do look out and see these beautiful horses. Do you suppose they can be Mrs. MacMillan's?"

Before Kathie could reach the window, the sleigh stopped at her door and Margery exclaimed,—

"They surely must be, Miss Kathie, for they have stopped here. And—why—Miss Kathie, Mr. MacMillan has come himself!"

"I am not surprised," Miss Woodward answered. "Archibald MacMillan is a firm believer in Miles Standish's old rule,—‘if you wish a thing to be well done, you must do it yourself; you must not leave it to others.’"

"You won't freeze in that sleigh nor be thrown out of it this afternoon, Margery; so much I can safely promise you."

Mr. MacMillan, when he entered, was soon found to have more than one thing on his mind that day that he was anxious to have well done.



He was commissioned by his mother, he pleasantly explained, to take Miss Hamilton to her; and at the same time he wanted to take Miss Kathie for a sleigh-ride. His mind, he playfully assured her, felt like a trunk in danger of bursting from being over-packed—it was so filled with messages from her uncle and other friends. He was very anxious to deliver them. Would she go with him now and hear them? Mrs. MacMillan, he added, meant to keep Miss Hamilton to tea, but he would only keep Miss Kathie out for an hour or two.

Miss Kathie was very willing to take the pleasure he offered her, and, as a consequence, Margery spent the quiet hours of that afternoon alone with Mrs. MacMillan.

They were pleasant hours—hours that through all her after-life the young girl never forgot. She did not understand why Mrs. MacMillan should feel so much interested in her; but that she was interested appeared to be an undeniable fact, and Margery took the good of it, without speculating as to the whys and wherefores, and gave Mrs. MacMillan—just what that lady wanted most—many truthful and attractive glimpses of a character of which, however short, it might fall of perfection, this much could be safely predicted: that it would aim always at the highest, and strive to choose always the best.



The short winter day closed early, but Margery and Mrs. MacMillan were still sitting in the dusky, fire-lighted library when Mr. MacMillan came in.

"Ah!" he said, as, with a pleasant word of greeting to Margery and his mother, he dropped into a chair beside the hearth, and extended his hands to the warm blaze, "this is truly comfort."

"What makes you so unusually appreciative of it to-night?" his mother asked.

"Miss Kathie, I suppose," he answered, soberly.

"Kathie!" Mrs. MacMillan echoed; "have you been talking with her all this afternoon?"

"Yes. We were out longer than I intended, but there seemed much to ask and to tell. And," Mr. MacMillan continued, while he looked earnestly at his mother, "it was the thought of how much seems crowded into some lives, and how much left altogether out of others, that made me, I think, feel especially thankful for the warmth and fullness of blessing in my own life and home to-night."

Mrs. MacMillan drew nearer to her son, and laid her hand gently on his head.

"'God knoweth ever what is best to give unto his own,'" she softly quoted. And then, in a moment, she added: "Dear Kathie! I wish—" but, whatever her wish was, Mrs. MacMillan did not express it. "We know that all things work together



for good to them that love God," she said, in conclusion, with a little thrill of joy in her voice; and then, returning to the matter-of-fact things of every-day, she said,—

"Come, Archie, if you are ready. I know Dulcie's chocolate and muffins are."

The pleasant tea was over, and in the cozy library Margery was looking at some fine, large stereoscopic views, when Mr. MacMillan, as he removed a picture of Windsor Castle and substituted a view of Westminster Abbey, said:

"Many who have ended their pilgrimage are resting there, Miss Hamilton. Their trials and triumphs are alike past; they are of no consequence now, save as they helped or hindered their gaining, not earth's laurel wreaths, but heaven's star-gemmed crowns."

"Yes," Margery said, with a little sigh. "If only they could have known once what they know now, Mr. MacMillan."

"It would have made but little difference," he answered, gravely. "'Enough to know' is always given us. It is not so much knowledge as faith the soul needs to guide it heavenward."

"Faith is an easy word to speak," Margery said, as she sat back in her chair; "but it is a hard lesson to learn."

"Have you found it so? Do you still find it so?" Mr. MacMillan asked, with kind interest.



"Yes, it is a hard lesson, Miss Hamilton, until our whole hearts are interested in it, our whole wills bent on learning it."

"Even then," Margery said, with a very sober face, "it seems to me, we learn it very slowly."

He smiled a little, though his next words were very grave. "How far along in that lesson are you?" he asked; "how much of it have you yet learned?"

"Not much," Margery answered, with the humble frankness of a child. "I know there are a multitude of precious promises in my Bible, Mr. MacMillan, but I seem really to possess very few of them—yet."

"There is one promise—'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee'—which is a sure guarantee that all the others shall be yours, if only you follow on to know the Lord," Mr. MacMillan said, kindly. "Have you become acquainted yet with the pilgrim, Professor Carter loves so much?" he asked, after a moment's pause.

"'Pilgrim's Progress'? Yes; I have read it once, and am reading it again."

"I am very glad. I do not believe it can be read too often," Mr. MacMillan replied. "Have you, may I ask, come to the House Beautiful yet?"

"No," Margery said, in a low, thoughtful voice. "Professor Carter helped me out of the



Slough of Despond, and Miss Kathie helped me to drop my burden. But"—and she sighed unconsciously—"I sometimes think, as I look forward, that the hill Difficulty is still before me, Mr. MacMillan."

He watched her with earnest, interested eyes. "It is not always wise to anticipate the trials of the future," he said, gently.

" 'Looking forward strains the eye-sight,'  
and only

‘Looking upward opens heaven.’

As the helpers have come heretofore when you most needed them, you must trust that they will come when needed hereafter. But—do you remember the little spring, at the foot of the hill, from which Christian drank before he began to climb?"

"Yes," Margery said, quickly.

"Have you drank from it?"

The kind but searching question touched Margery deeply.

"I don't know," she humbly confessed. "I am not sure I know just what that spring stands for."

"It may stand, perhaps, for any great help or blessing that strengthens the Christian to go bravely and hopefully along his way, however toilsome and steep it may be," Mr. MacMillan



gently explained. "For some it means, I think, the courage and joy that come when, as members of his family, they enter the Father's house and stand before the world as acknowledged and professed Christians, pledged to the service and the following of Christ."

"Is it always necessary to drink of that spring?" Margery asked, in a troubled voice.

"Is it not always necessary for a dutiful, loving child to honor a wise and tender father?" was his gentle, answering question.

"Do you really think it helps us?" Margery asked again.

"Do you mean to ask, if I think we are helped in our Christian life by coming out and joining the church?" Mr. MacMillan said, very seriously. "Yes, Miss Hamilton; about that there can be no question. What Christ requires, it can never be anything but a blessing to his servants to perform. By that spring, you remember, Christian was refreshed and strengthened before he began to go up the hill, and I believe that many a weak and wavering disciple is kept from making shipwreck of his faith altogether, by the solemn consciousness that the Church claims him as a member, and the fact that he has given his word to the Lord and dare not go back."

"But sometimes we seem to be hindered and



opposed, and friends disapprove," Margery sadly suggested.

"We call a great many things hindrances that, rightly used, would prove our greatest helps," Mr. MacMillan said, thoughtfully. "Opposition is a painful trial, yet it is a sure test of our sincerity and constancy. And—" Mr. MacMillan paused a moment, and then said, gently but decidedly, as he watched Margery's earnest face—"where friends disapprove, a Christian has but one course to pursue—to find out what God approves and do that, and leave all the consequences to him."

That night, as Margery was brushing out her hair, she suddenly asked:

"Miss Kathie, will there be a communion service here before we go back to school?"

"Yes, Margery."

"Then, if I write and ask father's permission, do you think Mr. Woodward would be willing to receive me into his church?"

"Willing!" Miss Woodward said, with a sweet though serious face. "Yes, more than willing, Margery. He will feel like Bunyan's saints, 'Glad when he shall hear the sound of thy feet step over thy Father's threshold.'"

"I will write to my father to-morrow," Margery resolved, as she dropped her head upon her pillow; and, true to her resolve, her first act in the morning was to write her letter.



An answer soon came.

Clifford was no better. Mr. Hamilton feared the worst,—though that fact he carefully concealed from Margery,—and in his anxiety and grief for one child, he felt little disposition to deny the other the dearest wish of her heart. The world's honors and pleasures were seen in a truer light as the father watched over his moaning son, and for the time he felt in his soul that it would be a blessed thing if they were all like Margery—safe whether they lived or died.

His kind assurance that “she might do as she pleased” removed Margery's last doubt, and with a heart full of thanksgiving she stood in Mr. Woodward's church on the first Sabbath in the new year, and solemnly, in the presence of men and the great “cloud of witnesses,” avouched the Lord Jehovah to be her Lord, and pledged herself forever more to be his willing servant, and “to walk in all his ways and to hearken unto his voice.”



## CHAPTER VII.

### CLIMBING HILL DIFFICULTY.

“ But the narrow way lay right up the hill, and the name of the going up the side of the hill is called Difficulty. . . . I looked then, after Christian, to see him go up the hill, where I perceived he fell from running to going, and from going to clambering upon his hands and his knees, because of the steepness of the place.”— *Pilgrim's Progress*.

EARLY in the first week of the new year Margery and Miss Woodward returned to school, and Margery took up her old life again with a stronger purpose to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith she was called,” and with the one humble, sincere prayer, that all the changes of the year, whether sorrowful or glad, might only make her more like him, who lived in this world and yet was not of it, and who, through all his life, sought not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him.

Are some of my young readers tempted to think, and even say, that Margery was setting up too high a standard for herself, and making too personal a matter and too literal an application of the command : “Be not conformed to this world”?



The world, I know, would say so. Many, even, who are professed Christians, I fear would say so. Christ says differently ; and it was Christ whom Margery had chosen for her guide, and Christ whose voice she meant to obey.

She did not know the trials before her. She could not even guess the temptations that would beset her ; but she did know that he who went before his disciples in the way going up to Jerusalem was just as surely going now before her, and knowing that, she could walk steadfastly onward, following as she was led.

She had expected to remain at Madame Girard's until the close of the school year, but as the spring vacation approached, her parents began to form other plans for her. Clifford was well again and once more engrossed in the fashionable society in which it was his highest ambition to have a name and a place. And Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, when once their anxiety for their son was relieved, had returned with zest to their old life, reminding one of trees, that are sometimes, by some great weight, bent down in a direction contrary to their growth, but that, as soon as the restraint is removed, spring back to their natural position.

They were very ambitious for Margery ; they had formed plans for her that her "peculiar notions," as they called them, threatened to ruin. School-life was evidently, as Mrs. Hamilton pathetically said,



“failing to cure her.” Now her parents resolved to try other ways and means of accomplishing their purposes for her. So early in the spring, at the close of the winter term, Margery was taken home. Masters were provided for some of her favorite studies, and for a little while the girl rejoiced in the freedom and ease that seemed especially pleasant after the restraint and discipline of her school-life.

She was very happy, but her parents and brother watched her with dissatisfied eyes.

They could not deny that she was lovelier in character than ever, more thoughtful of the comfort of all around her, more gentle in word and manner, more patient under reproof, and more willing to resign her own wishes and forsake the doing of her own will in order to please others.

But as an offset to all this, there was her firm refusal to do anything she thought wrong,—her quiet indifference to the young and giddy society they tried to gather around her ; her devotion to the church, and prayer-meetings, and Sabbath-school, and her growing interest in missions and all religious and charitable work.

“I do not understand,” Mrs. Hamilton said, fretfully, to her husband one day, “why my only daughter should be so unlike other girls. If she were only like Laura Stanton, now, I could take some comfort in her ; but as she is, she annoys me



greatly, and I do wish you had not consented to let her join the church."

"I do not know," Mr. Hamilton slowly replied, "as I am sorry I did that ; it is a very respectable thing to be a church member, and I would not object to Margery's being a Christian, if she was only like the Christians we see all around us—dressing and living just as we do, with no difference between us that any one can see. It is all very well, of course, to prepare for death, but while folks are alive, I think their wisest plan is to live like other people. They need not be worse, but I really do not think they need try to be better than their neighbors."

"Well," Mrs. Hamilton said, impatiently, "if you would only find some way to make Margery like other people, I'd be thankful."

Mr. Hamilton considered his wife's suggestion a few moments ; then he said, as if a bright idea had just occurred to him :

"Dress her beautifully and take her into society."

"She always has dressed beautifully," Mrs. Hamilton said quickly, with a little resentment that Mr. Hamilton should, for a moment, suppose that that important part of Margery's education had ever been neglected ; "and she doesn't seem to care much about it, either," she added, dolefully. "And as for society, she told me the other day she



didn't want fashionable acquaintances. She only wanted friends who were wiser and better than herself, and who would help her to grow like them."

Mr. Hamilton frowned and stroked his beard, as was his custom when annoyed or perplexed.

"Indulgent as we are, Margery must be made to understand that we are not disposed to gratify all her whims," he said presently, in a decided voice. "My mind is made up. I will put an end to this nonsense. Send out your invitations for a dinner party next Thursday."

"Mrs. Richman has already sent us invitations for a ball for that evening."

"So much the better. We will go from the dinner table to the ball-room."

"But Margery told me this morning she did not want to go to the ball."

"She will go. It is no longer a question of what she wants, but of what I will."

"Mr. Stevenson has just returned from Paris, and is at his aunt's, Mrs. Stanton's," Mrs. Hamilton said, in a moment, in a very quiet but peculiar tone, "and Laura told me yesterday he was very anxious to meet Margery. You remember how she disappointed him that Sunday last fall."

"She will not disappoint him again," Mr. Hamilton said, almost fiercely. "If Margery does not know enough to take care of her own interests, why I will take care of them for her; that's all."



And with a bang of the door that seemed to add "and that's enough," Mr. Hamilton went off to his office.

Thursday soon came. The invitations for the dinner had been sent out and accepted, and late in the afternoon Margery dressed herself for the evening. Mrs. Hamilton superintended her toilet and declared herself well satisfied with its results.

"You look lovely, Margery," she said, in a pleased voice; "now do be a sensible girl and act this evening like other people."

"I will do my best to please you, mother," Margery promised; but it was with a secret shrinking and fear that she left her room.

"In the world, yet not of it," she thought, sadly, as she went slowly down the wide staircase. How could she ever conform her life to that high ideal? She was in the world; at that moment she had a vivid consciousness of that fact, and evidently her parents meant she should be of the world; while opposed to their wishes was Christ's command, "Come out from the world and be ye separate."

It was the order of her King; yet—weak and helpless as she was—could she obey it?

Sweetly at that moment came the memory of David's words, so strong in their glad faith and confidence,—

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from



whence cometh my help. My help *cometh* from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

Then it was sure help,—help that would never fail her.

Margery rested on it, and dismissing every fear, went calmly forward to meet her parents' guests.

Laura was there and her cousin, Mr. Stevenson. Margery had never met him, but Laura had often spoken of him, and Margery well knew that he was very wealthy, and that wherever he went, he was sought and courted by those who care little how light the brains are, as long as the purse is heavy.

As she acknowledged her introduction to him, oddly enough Margery's thoughts reverted to Miss Woodward's definition of that word—to lead within—and then to Mrs. MacMillan's gentle suggestion—where soul can speak to soul.

She would receive no such introductions that evening, she sadly decided. But, then, faith whispered, if she did not, it would be because her heavenly Father knew it was best she should not. She had not chosen her place that evening, yet neither had she come to it by accident. God had chosen it for her; whatever the second causes might be, he was behind them all, and she had only to do her duty and leave all results to him.

Some such thought had just crossed Margery's mind at the dinner table, when a gentleman near her said,—



"Miss Hamilton, you have no wine. Allow me." And he held the elegant cut-glass decanter temptingly over her glass.

"I do not drink wine," Margery said, quietly, yet with a painful consciousness that her parents were watching and listening to her words.

"You may depart from your usual custom to-night, Margery," her father said, in a voice that, despite its outward smoothness, covered, she instinctively felt, a command.

"Then, among so many kinds, father, you will let me choose the one I prefer, I am sure," she said, gently; "and I will choose the oldest in existence, the kind Adam and Eve drank in Eden."

"Nonsense," Clifford broke in, angrily, from across the table, while Mr. Stevenson, who sat beside her, said, in an amused voice,—

"Really, Miss Hamilton, you must excuse me; but, upon my word, this is most extraordinary. Do you really mean that you do not drink wine?"

"I really mean it," Margery said, with heightened color.

Mr. Stevenson laughed as if Margery's answer was very amusing.

"Are you wearing a blue ribbon anywhere?" he asked, with pretended curiosity, as he glanced at her dress.

"Yes; in my conscience," she said, coldly.



"Margery's conscience is very apt to be dressed in colors that are very far from becoming," Laura said, in a low voice, meant only for her cousin and Margery.

Mr. Stevenson laughed again, sipped his own wine with undisguised enjoyment, and then once more turned to Margery.

"If you will not drink wine with me, Miss Hamilton," he said, "I hope you will not be so cruel as to refuse to play cards with me. My aunt, Mrs. Stanton, gives a whist-party to-morrow evening; may I count upon you as my partner?"

Poor Margery fairly winced at that unexpected request. She knew that her parents were waiting for her answer as well as Mr. Stevenson, and she knew also that that answer would bitterly displease them. But she must give it, and very quietly she said,—

"I do not play cards."

"No?" Mr. Stevenson exclaimed, in well-feigned surprise. "Are cards, as well as wine, under the ban, Miss Hamilton?"

"It would seem so," Laura said, in a low, contemptuous voice. "Some people would make good popes if *banning* innocent pleasures was the only thing they had to do."

Mr. Stevenson paid no attention to Laura's unkind remark. For reasons best known to him-



self, he seemed bent on drawing Margery out, and making her plainly declare her opinions.

“Whist seems to me a very pleasant parlor amusement,” he continued, as he found that Margery ignored his last question. “I think it every way more innocent for people to amuse themselves with cards than for them to amuse themselves, as they so often do, with their tongues, gossiping about each other as if characters were nothing more than so many yards of ribbon provided expressly for them to cut and tear to pieces. I detest gossip, Miss Hamilton ; but I do not see, now, ’pon my word, I do not see, the slightest harm in a game of cards.”

“Some eyes are color-blind, you know,” Margery said, with a tremulous sort of smile, “and seldom see things in their true light.”

“Does that apply to your own eyes or to Mr. Stevenson’s?” Clifford asked, sharply. “Possibly, if you asked the opinion of your friends, you would find that your own ability to distinguish blue from red is seriously doubted.”

“Beg pardon, Clifford,” Mr. Stevenson said, as he again raised his glass in a way that made Margery feel that danger was very near ; “but, as there are no danger signals hung out to-night, it is a matter of very little importance whether we call red blue or blue red ; but I do want to know—if Miss Hamilton will pardon my curiosity—if she



really is such a Puritan of the Puritans as to disapprove of cards?"

Weeks before Margery had asked herself that question, and answered it for once and forever in the affirmative.

Her's was an earnest nature. She could never do things by halves. She had never played a game of whist without making every effort to win, and without feeling irritated and annoyed when beaten. Card-playing would certainly never help her to grow in sweetness of temper or meekness of heart. For her it would always be a hindrance in her journey heavenward.

Perhaps she was unusually weak, and others were not tempted and influenced as she was? She would watch and see. And she did so. She saw many games of cards played, but rarely one in which there was not more or less of bitterness, pride and anger displayed, either in word or manner, and often in both. And, judged by that alone, Margery decided that cards must be a game very dear to Satan, and one in whose invention he had aided for the express purpose of encouraging "angry passions" to rise. But Margery's consideration of the subject caused her to view it as something more than a mere personal matter, that might or might not be fraught with harm to herself. She knew—for she had witnessed it—that in many "pleasant parlor games of cards" gentle-



men—and ladies also—were in the habit of staking small sums of money—“just for the sake of adding to the interest and excitement of the game.” Even worse than this, she knew that her own brother Clifford, and many of the young men who were his most intimate associates, were in the habit of playing in far more public places than their own parlors, and of playing there for money.

Knowing all this, Margery had solemnly asked herself, “What, as a Christian, she ought to do? What Christ would bid her do if he were now on earth and she could go to him to decide the question for her?”

She found her answer in the Bible. Found it in her Lord’s own fearful reproach of his people, that they were a “comfort to Sodom;” found it also in St. Paul’s grand rule for Christian life and conduct: “Wherefore, if meat maketh my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

Cards did make, not only her brother, but many another woman’s brother, to offend; and card-playing was one of the ways in which many Christians did “comfort” the irreligious and unbelieving.

Margery had been over the whole ground. She was fully convinced in her own mind. But now came the bitterest part of it all for the sensitive,



shrinking girl—she must give an answer to him that opposed. Evidently, Mr. Stevenson meant to have that answer. He was waiting for it, and watching her with smiling, yet observant eyes. Clifford and Laura were also waiting, and her own father and mother.

Oh, if they only knew how much pain they caused her! if they would only let her alone! only let her go her way in peace! But that, it was plain, they would never do, for even while she hesitated her father said, sternly,—

“You have not answered Mr. Stevenson, Margery.”

And, without raising her eyes, the troubled girl truthfully answered: “Yes, I do disapprove of cards, Mr. Stevenson.”

“I am afraid you are either far behind the age or else a long distance ahead of it,” Mr. Stevenson said, carelessly; “but please tell me, am I to understand that you prefer gossip to cards?”

“Is the choice inevitable between the two?” Margery forced herself to ask. “That gossip is wrong does not prove card-playing right.”

“No, and let me assure you that the mere fact that you disapprove of cards does not prove them wrong,” Clifford said, angrily. “You are perfectly ridiculous, Margery. Society will never tolerate your absurd notions, I can tell you that.”

“Society will never be asked to tolerate them,”



Mr. Hamilton said, in a smooth, bland voice that well concealed his intense displeasure. "Margery has some extreme notions, Mr. Stevenson, but you must excuse her, for she is still young and has not yet learned that moderation is the golden rule of life. But"—and Mr. Hamilton's tone was as emphatic as it was quiet—"I think I can promise you, that if you do her the honor to ask her, Margery will be your partner to-morrow evening."

"I shall certainly ask her," Mr. Stevenson said, with a bow to Margery. And Margery made no reply, for words seemed vain and useless.

Two or three hours later, Margery, with her parents, entered Mrs. Richman's elegant house. Nothing grander than that lady's ball had been given in the city that season, said her invited guests; and Margery could not help being fascinated with the brilliant lights and music, the exquisite flowers that transformed the beautiful rooms into fairy bowers, and the richly-dressed, graceful dancers.

It was a bewitching scene, and for a little while Margery watched it, as she would a picture, with undisguised pleasure. But she was not suffered to enjoy it long.

"Miss Hamilton," Mr. Stevenson said, as at the end of a dance he found his way to her, "they are just forming for a waltz; may I have the pleasure?" and he offered his hand.



Margery looked up with a disturbed face.

"Excuse me, please," she said, in a low voice.

But Mr. Hamilton, who stood behind her chair, had heard both the request and answer.

"Go ! I command you !" he whispered in her ear, and not daring to disobey, Margery reluctantly arose.

She had scarcely stood a moment, however, and Mr. Stevenson had just bent over her so that his breath touched her cheek, when she drew back and quietly resumed her seat.

"I have changed my mind ; I will not dance to-night," she said, in a very low but decided voice. And after hovering about her a few minutes, and saying many frivolous things about her cruelty, Mr. Stevenson went off to find another and more willing partner.

"What does this mean ?" Mrs. Hamilton whispered, angrily, behind her fan. "You are positively disgracing me, Margery. Why will you be so ridiculous ?"

"I cannot help it, mother," Margery whispered in reply. "I am very sorry to displease you, but I cannot dance."

"I thought you knew how to behave yourself in company," Mr. Hamilton said, in a voice that was none the less severe because it was very low ; "but it seems I was sadly mistaken. You are as rude as you are foolish. Now you may choose.



Either promise me to dance every time you are asked this evening, or else go home in the carriage alone, knowing that you have incurred my severest displeasure."

"I will go home," Margery said, firmly, though she trembled in every limb.

Mr. Hamilton was too angry to speak, but he did not forget to pay due regard to appearances. Margery's sudden departure was explained to his hostess as due to a slight indisposition, and then his carriage was quickly summoned, and Margery placed within it.

"You will remain in your room to-morrow morning until I send for you," he said, sternly, as he closed the carriage-door, and, more wretched than she had ever been before, Margery returned to her home.

The next morning was one of rare and perfect beauty. It was an early spring day. Snow-drops and crocuses were timidly peeping above the moist earth, and blue-birds and robins were just beginning to think of their summer homes. The world did, indeed, look very lovely that morning; but its loveliness had little power to cheer and comfort Margery, as, alone in her room, she waited for her father's summons.

When and how was this conflict between her parents and herself to end? Margery could not tell. It seemed very terrible that obedience to



Christ should be regarded by her parents as willful disobedience to them, and very dreadful that they should be determined to make her do the very things she felt she ought to leave undone. What should she do? where could she find help? Even as she asked herself that sorrowful question a servant came with a message from Mr. Hamilton, and as she prepared to obey it, this word came to quiet all her fears and strengthen her for the trial:

“I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not.”

So held, even though the storm raged fiercely around her, faith whispered that she was safe. Still she had a very loving human heart, and it was a very sorrowful one that morning when she entered her parents' presence.

“Now, tell me,” Mr. Hamilton began, sternly, as soon as she was seated, “tell me why you disobeyed me last evening, and refused to dance with Mr. Stevenson.”

“Father,”—and in spite of Margery's sorrow her usually soft eyes blazed with indignation as she answered,—“that man had been drinking; his breath was hot with liquor, and he *dared* to come and ask me to dance with him.”

“Stuff, nonsense!” Mrs. Hamilton said, scornfully. “You are no better than other girls, Margery, and there was not another girl in that ball-



room last night who did not feel complimented by any attention from Mr. Stevenson."

"I am not like other girls, then, mother. I did not feel complimented."

Mr. Hamilton moved uneasily in his chair. Man of the world though he was, he yet loved his young daughter's purity. He felt a secret reverence for her scorn of all that was low and mean. He hardly wanted to change her there. And yet—and yet—he did want her—as he phrased it—to be like other people. And in his eyes—as in the eyes of how many others?—wealth and position could cover a multitude of sins.

"You will have to get used to such things, Margery," he said, slowly. "Most young men in society occasionally indulge a little too freely. You will have to overlook it—all women do."

"I shall be an exception to other women, then, father, for I will *never* overlook it."

"I wonder what you expect, Margery," Mrs. Hamilton said, angrily. "Here you are, a young girl just ready to enter society, and no person and no thing seems good enough for you. Do you expect to find angels among men? I warn you—you will be disappointed if you do."

"I do not think I expect or require anything extravagant, mother. I only want to do right myself—as far as I can—and to choose my friends among good people."



"And I suppose you do not class Mr. Stevenson among your good people?"

"I do not think he would wish me to class him among them, mother."

"And you do not want him for a friend, either, I suppose."

"No, mother, he never could be a friend of mine."

"You are a fool," Mrs. Hamilton said, in an excited voice. "Here is a young man belonging to one of the most aristocratic families in the city, possessed of immense wealth, and evidently—though I must say I wonder at it—disposed to admire you. And you presume to snub and scorn him as if, forsooth, he was not good enough for you. You ought to be placed in a straight-jacket and fed on bread and water until you come to your senses."

"I do not want to snub him, mother. I simply want nothing to do with him."

"You do not know what you want, Margery," her father said, calmly. "You have not considered these matters as you will a few years from now. Wealth and position are very desirable things in this world, as you will know when you are older. And if we were to allow you to ruin all your prospects by indulging you in these ultra notions, you have in some way acquired, you would probably regret it bitterly some time, when too late to retrieve what you have lost. We will pass all that



for the present. You displeased and disappointed me greatly last night. I hoped to see my daughter shining in the society for which I have spared no pains to fit her, and instead of gratifying my reasonable expectations she made me positively ashamed of her. Her ill manners might have been pardoned in a milk-maid, but they could not be pardoned in Miss Hamilton. Yet we will overlook all that. We will forgive and forget all that has already happened if you will promise us for the future to be reasonable and obedient. Will you?"

"Father, I will obey you always, when I can."

"Why do you add those limiting words, 'when I can?' "

"Because, father, I am a Christian. I must obey Christ first."

"Very well. Probably that obedience can be easily reconciled with obedience to us. I believe Christ commands children to obey their parents, does he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then your course is clear. It is your duty to obey me."

"Always when I can, father, I will. But I must do what my Bible and my conscience tell me I ought to do."

"Pity you were not a Jesuit," Mr. Hamilton said, bitterly; "such morbid natures as yours



ought always to have a conscience-keeper. But I will begin to specify my requirements. Will you promise me, first, to go to every party to which you may be invited during the remainder of this season, and to dance whenever you are asked?"

"Father, please don't require me to dance round dances—I do not want to—I cannot endure them."

"I am sorry to find your powers of endurance so sadly limited," Mr. Hamilton answered, sarcastically. "But you will have to decide here either to endure the dances or else to endure my sternest displeasure. You are at liberty to choose which will be most agreeable."

"Father," Margery cried, as well as she could for the sobs that nearly choked her, "please do not make it so hard for me to do right."

"I will make it just as hard for you as I can," Mr. Hamilton said, in a cold, severe voice. "You do not know what is right. You have only got a few extreme views in your mind that you are brooding over, and that will soon make you, if you are not rid of them, a fit subject for a lunatic asylum. I will have no more patience with them. Call yourself a Christian—if that name is one you are particularly fond of—and go regularly to church every Sunday, if you like. But understand, once for all, that the other days of the week you are to live in the world and do like



other people. And now you may go. I will give you until to-morrow to decide whether you will obey or disobey me. And be sure of this: if you presume to disobey me, I will make your punishment as heavy as I can. I have a right to your obedience and I will have it. Go now! I have nothing more to say to you until to-morrow morning."

Margery could not speak. Silently she left the library, and, rushing to her room, dropped on her knees beside her bed. "God help me!" she prayed; "God help me, for the way is too hard. I shall fail except thou hold me up."

Slowly and sadly the hours of that long day went by. Margery spent them in the solitude of her own room, but early the next morning her father again sent for her. It was with a pale and tearful face that she appeared before him, but Mr. Hamilton looked even firmer and more decided than usual.

"You have had a good many hours to consider the subject we discussed yesterday, Margery," he said, "and I hope you are prepared to tell me now that you will comply with our wishes."

It was hard for Margery to speak, but with a painful effort she managed to say,—

"Father, please tell me once more exactly what your wishes are."

"They are easy to tell and equally easy to



gratify," was the cool answer. "I simply wish you to conform to the customs of the world and act like other people."

Conform to the customs of the world! Yea, verily, that would be an easy thing to do; but only that morning Margery had read "Be ye not conformed to this world." And she had found that order in her Bible, where, if it meant anything, it meant just what it said. And believing that, for Margery there could be no compromising nor hesitation.

"Father," she said, in a low, sweet voice, "always when I can, and just as far as I can, I will do as you desire. But where the Bible and Christ say no, there, father, I must stop."

"And you would think it necessary to stop, I suppose, whenever you came to a ball-room, or a theatre, or to a wine-glass, or a card-table, would you not?"

"Yes, father." The answer was low and sad, but very firm.

"You are a perfect fanatic," Mrs. Hamilton said, in a sharp, angry voice. "You are reading meanings into your Bible that do not belong there. If you would only use a little common sense, you would find it easy enough to do like the rest of the world."

"Hush!" Mr. Hamilton said, almost sternly, to his wife; and then in a moment he continued,—



“Margery, you are doing a very unusual and a very uncalled-for thing. I really think you have a very mistaken idea of religion. It was intended to prepare men for death. I do not believe it was ever expected that people would carry it into every detail of their daily life. Look around you. Everywhere you will see Christians—members of church—who do, without any hesitation, the very things you are refusing to do; yet they have Bibles as well as you. And if the Bible really forbids—as you think it does—indulgence in all these worldly pleasures, why do they not obey it? Do you not see that, in acting as you do, you are really setting yourself up as better than your neighbors, and virtually condemning them? For such conduct you will receive small thanks or love, I can assure you.”

“I do not mean to do anything like that,” Margery answered, with a sob. “If the Bible is true, father, then Christians are to follow Christ, and I cannot believe that Christ would ever lead me into ball-rooms or theatres, would ever sit down with me at a card-table, or ever—when it causes so much misery—look with pleasure at the wine-glass.”

Mr. Hamilton bit his lip in undisguised anger. “Will nothing make you reasonable?” he asked, fiercely. “Margery, I warned you yesterday that I would punish you severely if you persisted in your



disobedience, and you know well that I am in the habit of keeping my promises. Now, listen : two weeks from to-day I propose to sail for Europe. Your mother will go with me,—you, too, if you are obedient,—and we will remain abroad for at least six months. You are very fond of traveling. You have often wished to go to Europe. Now here is your opportunity. Speak but one word ; say only yes when I ask you now—for the last time—to do as I wish, and there is no pleasure that love and money can procure that you shall not enjoy. Everywhere you wish to go you shall go. Everything you desire to possess you shall possess, if wealth can buy it. And, over and above all else,”—and Mr. Hamilton’s voice trembled with deep feeling now,—“you will have the glad knowledge that you have made me very happy ; that you are still as you have always been—the darling of my heart. Will you do as I wish, Margery ?”

There was a profound silence in that beautiful room for many moments after Mr. Hamilton’s last words. Once or twice a coal fell from the grate, glowed brightly on the hearth for an instant and then went out. And once a sigh from Mr. Hamilton and a sob from Margery told how solemn was the moment. No other sounds broke the painful hush in which a young heart was gathering all its strength for the decision on which its destiny throughout eternity, perhaps, would rest.



Margery moved at last. Her lips half parted as if to speak.

"Wait," Mr. Hamilton commanded, as he watched her face.

"I have said how I would reward your obedience, Margery. Hear, now, how I will punish your disobedience. There is an old place, far away from here, on the south side of Long Island. It is a lonely place; so small it does not deserve the name of a village. It is far away from the railroad, from a telegraph, or even from a post-office. Pine woods hem it in on one side and a great bay spreads between it and the ocean on the other. One might almost as well be out of the world as there, Margery; but there you will go if you will not obey me. There is a plain, old-fashioned farm-house, a mile at least from any neighbors, where I will procure board for you, and there, under Mrs. True's care, you will remain during all our absence abroad. Is it worth while to make yourself as miserable as you will be there, Margery? Will you not yield now and make us all happy?"

"Father—forgive me—I—cannot."

As he heard those decisive words, Mr. Hamilton's face grew rigid.

"So be it," he said, in a cold, stern tone. "As you have made your choice, you must abide by it. You will go to Pine Clumps one week from to-day."



## CHAPTER VIII.

### IN THE ARBOR ON THE HILL-SIDE.

“Now, about midway to the top of the hill was a pleasant arbor, made by the Lord of the hill for the refreshment of weary travelers. Thither, therefore, Christian got, where also he sat down to rest him. . . . Thus pleasing himself awhile, he at last fell into a slumber.”—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

THE course which Mr. Hamilton had decided to take with Margery he firmly adhered to, and on the day he had appointed she started with Mrs. True for Pine Clumps.

It was early in the morning of a lovely April day. The air was full of spring's delicious fragrance, and the world was full of sights and sounds that told that the winter was over and gone, and that “the time of the singing of birds” had once more come. Little of all this did Margery see or hear. To know that she was separated from her parents, that they had parted from her with cold displeasure, and that the ocean was soon to roll between them and herself, seemed to Margery that morning more than she could bear. Head and heart alike were aching, and, with a feeling of



utter indifference as to where she was going or what might happen to her, she followed Mrs. True into the car, and took the seat she selected for her.

Her father had told her she was going out of the world, and it was soon evident that only a very small part of the world was going in her direction that morning.

Her fellow-passengers were two or three school-boys, with what seemed to be an inexhaustible supply of peanuts, a young woman, who was quickly absorbed in the columns of a weekly story-paper, and a few men, who discussed politics and agriculture, until their farms—in theory, at least,—were all well-tilled, and all the troublesome government problems in a fair way—if their judgment were only followed—to be wisely settled. There was but one other, a gentleman, whose book, if one could judge from his face, seemed to give him much pleasure, and who, when not reading, still looked as if he had only “noble thoughts for company.” Interested in his book, he had not noticed Margery when she first entered the car. A little later, when, for an instant, he caught sight of her face, he half arose, as if inclined to claim her acquaintance; but, after a moment’s hesitation, he apparently decided that he was mistaken in thinking he knew her, and quietly resumed his seat and his book.

More than once after that, however, he glanced



with curious interest at the corner where Margery was sitting, half-hidden by good Mrs. True; but her face was turned from him, and if he found it difficult to throw aside his suspicions, he found it equally difficult to verify them.

Slowly and sadly for Margery the hours went by, while the train rushed on through a monotonous, uninteresting country, bearing her still farther and farther away from her home and friends, and increasing with every jolt the blinding pain in her head.

“Oh, dear me, Miss Margery!” Mrs. True exclaimed, as suddenly, with a low groan, Margery turned her white face towards her. “Oh, dear me! Are you going to faint?”

The next moment Mrs. True found herself pleasantly dispossessed of her portion of the seat, and a pillow of soft shawls was quickly improvised, and Margery’s aching head laid comfortably upon it. Kind, skillful hands ministered to the half-conscious girl then. A bottle of ammonia was produced from somewhere, and with a few strong whiffs of that, a faint color returned to Margery’s pallid cheeks, and, with eyes full of a surprised, half-doubtful recognition, she looked at her strange friend.

“Are you better?” he asked, with a smile that she at once remembered.

“Oh, Mr. MacMillan!” she exclaimed; but



then her voice was choked with hysterical sobs, and more words were impossible.

Apparently Mr. MacMillan did not need more. With a grave, kind face, he waited and watched, doing little things for her comfort and relieving Mrs. True of all care; but he asked no questions, until presently Margery was able to look up and speak again.

"Thank you!" she said, as she gently stopped the palm-leaf with which he was fanning her; "I do not need it now. Oh, Mr. MacMillan, what a surprise it is to see you here to-day!"

"It is a very pleasant surprise to me," he smilingly answered. "May I ask how far you are going?"

"I don't know how far," Margery said; "but we are going to a place called Pine Clumps."

"Pine Clumps," Mr. MacMillan repeated; "then we are truly fellow-travelers, for I am going there, too."

"It is almost out of the world, isn't it?" Margery asked, in a doleful voice.

"Hardly, I think," he said, cheerfully; "for we are both still in the world, and both, it seems, going there. Have you never been there, Miss Margery?"

"No," Margery answered. And then, with a sudden burst of feeling, she exclaimed, "And I wish I wasn't going there now."



It was plain that there was some serious reason for Margery's being where she was, when it was clearly so much against her inclinations. But, however curious he might feel, Mr. MacMillan made no effort to learn that reason.

Margery's head still ached ; she was not fit for much conversation, and, beyond an occasional pleasant word, Mr. MacMillan considerately left her to the quiet she so much needed.

As the day advanced, the beautiful morning sky grew dark and threatening. Masses of sombre clouds shut out the sunshine, and the wind began to sob and sigh in the strange, peculiar way that so often precedes a shower. Soon great drops of rain came beating against the sides and windows of the car, and then came a deep, long rumble, as of distant thunder, followed quickly by a sharp flash of lightning.

"A thunder-shower," Mrs. True observed, more to herself than her companions. "The spring is really here at last."

All her life Margery had suffered from a nervous dread of thunder-showers ; and now, in her weak state, the thought of one fairly terrified her.

"Oh," she moaned, helplessly, as she heard Mrs. True's remark, "are we going to have a thunder-shower? Oh, how can I bear it?"

"Can you not bear all that your heavenly Father sends?" Mr. MacMillan asked, gently.



“He will suffer nothing really to harm you, Miss Margery. This rain-fall will only sweeten the air, and it will soon be over. See! the clouds are already growing brighter.”

Margery could not speak, but with closed eyes she leaned against her pillow, trying, in a spirit of humble trust, to leave herself, with all her weaknesses, in his hands who would suffer no evil to befall her. On, through the storm and gloom, they journeyed for awhile; but the shower, as Mr. MacMillan had predicted, did not last long. Soon the dark clouds began to break, and through their rifts bits of tender, blue sky peered shyly forth; the rain-drops became wonderful prisms, all aglow with color; and presently, in the tremulous beauty of smiles that shone through tears, the sunshine was glistening everywhere. The storm was over, and so also was their journey.

“The next station will be the one for Pine Clumps,” the conductor said, as he took their tickets, and in a bustle of excitement Mrs. True began to collect shawl-straps and packages.

“I suppose,” she said, a little doubtfully, as they left the car, “I suppose we will find a conveyance of some kind waiting for us here, Miss Margery?”

“Father said Mr. Smith would meet us,” Margery answered, as she glanced with anxious eyes about her.



The train had left them apparently in the midst of a forest. There was not a dwelling-house in sight. Nothing that spoke of human life was to be seen, except the little station-house into which Mr. MacMillan thoughtfully led them.

"Come in here," he said; "it is too damp to stand on the platform. And now tell me, if you please, Miss Margery, where you are going."

"To a farm-house belonging to a Mr. Smith," Margery briefly explained.

"He's here, I think," Mrs. True, who had been looking out of the opposite door, just then reported. "There are two conveyances waiting a little back under the trees,—I suppose they didn't dare to come nearer for fear of frightening their horses,—one is a handsome carriage, Miss Margery, and the other an old, clumsy box-wagon without springs, or even cushions on the seats. Now, which do you suppose,"—and Mrs. True's voice plainly expressed her anxiety,—"which do you suppose is meant for us?"

"I will ascertain," Mr. MacMillan said, promptly. And as they watched him Margery and Mrs. True saw him go to the man in the box-wagon, and after a few words with him, turn to the coachman of the handsome carriage. Only a word or two there, and then the coachman turned his horses towards the platform that surrounded the little station-house, and Mr. MacMillan returned to Margery.



"This is your carriage," he said, pleasantly. "You will have no more trouble and will soon be safe at Mr. Smith's."

"And you, Mr. MacMillan," Margery ventured to say, "how are you going?"

"In the opposite direction in the wagon," he said, with a smile. "Good-by, Miss Margery," he continued in a minute, after Mrs. True and Margery were comfortably seated in the carriage. "I am very sorry 'good-by' must follow 'how do you do?' so speedily, but I fear it cannot be avoided."

Margery turned a very sober face towards him. "Won't we see you again?" she asked. "Don't you remain in Pine Clumps?"

"Only for a couple of hours to-day, I regret to say," he answered. "Business for a friend called me here, and that business requires me to return to the city by the afternoon train. But you—do you stay here long, Miss Margery?"

"I believe so," she said, soberly. "I have come for a long time, I think."

Mr. MacMillan looked for a moment as if he would like to ask an explanation of her evident trouble, but he checked himself.

"I must not detain you," he said, regretfully, "nor"—with a smile—"allow you to detain me, for my business requires haste. Good-by once more, Miss Margery." And then, as he bent to



arrange the lap-robe, he added, in a lower tone, "Do you see how bright the sunshine is now? The clouds have all been swept away: they are rarely suffered to surround God's children long." And with a smile and bow, Mr. MacMillan went off to his box-wagon, the coachman started his horses, and a quick ride of half an hour brought Margery to her new home in Pine Clumps.

She was too weary to pay much attention to her strange surroundings that day; but the next morning she was better, and then, with curious eyes, she looked about her. It was a plain, weather-beaten, old farm-house, as her father had told her. It was perfectly comfortable,—for Mr. Hamilton would never have sent his daughter where she would want any real comfort,—but it was very plainly furnished, and evidently belonged to thrifty, hard-working people, who believed with all their hearts in neatness, but who had never allowed the beautiful to enter either their home or lives. There was nothing in the house to attract her, and with a sigh Margery opened the front door and stepped out on the old stone that served for a door-step.

What a wonderful world she suddenly found herself in! The eastern sky was still pink with the last lingering touches of the sunrise; the clear, soft air was full of sweet sea scents; a colony of birds, that seemed to have returned that very



morning from some sunny southern land, were twittering all about her like a company of gossips, all eager to tell the first bit of news; a ploughman was already at work in a field near the house, and a brood of young chickens was straying about under the safe guidance of a mother hen, whose constant calls told how anxious and watchful she was. A short distance from the house Margery saw with delight a grove of magnificent, grand old oaks, whose leaves were but just unfolding, and looked at present like little more than soft clusters of tiny red tassels, while, nearer the house, an orchard of old apple-trees promised both shade and fruit for the fast-approaching summer days.

Pleasant as were all these hints and promises of spring, Margery scarcely noticed them; for before her, so near that a few steps would take her to its shore, spread the waters of a beautiful bay, as blue, that morning, as if a part of the lovely April sky had fallen upon it, and as peaceful as if no stormy wind had ever swept its surface. With just the faintest, tiniest murmur, it broke upon the pebbly shore, while far across, beyond its wide expanse, Margery could see the low banks that bordered the Atlantic beach and hear the solemn surge of the restless waters and catch the gleam of the white-capped waves as they rolled ceaselessly landward. And over all was the indescribable freshness and sweetness of that early spring morning.



Margery stood and watched the wonderful scene a long time ; and then, cheered and strengthened by it, obeyed Mrs. True's summons and went in to breakfast.

As soon as breakfast was over, however, she went out again, this time with Mrs. True, and they soon found their way to the barn, where Mr. Smith was busy with his horses.

"You have a very comfortable carriage, Mr. Smith," Mrs. True said ; while at the same time she was obliged to own to herself that nothing her eyes could see gave her tongue any warrant for making that assertion.

"Kerridge, ma'am," Mr. Smith repeated ; "waal, ma'am, if you say so, I ain't goin' to deny it ; but I must say I dunno where you see it."

"Why, I mean the carriage that brought us here yesterday ; I thought it was yours."

"Waal," Mr. Smith slowly observed, "thoughts are strange things, ma'am, an' it's surprisin' how mighty easy it is for 'em to be mistaken. That weren't no kerridge of mine. I don't invest in kerridges. I think the savings-bank the best place for hard-earned money like mine."

"How did Mr. MacMillan get it for us, then?" Margery asked, in a puzzled voice.

"That was easy enough," Mr. Smith explained, as he took down some old harness and proceeded to examine it. "That air kerridge came from a



handsome place not fur from here that belongs to a city gentleman. It was waiting for that Mr. MacMillan, and so he comes and asks me if I wouldn't exchange passengers, as the kerridge would be more comfortable for you. 'Twas six of one an' half-dozen of 'tother to me, I told him, only that his way was a leetle the longest. But he made that all right. Mighty nice kind of a man he is, I reckon." And, having delivered that opinion, Mr. Smith went off to his day's work, and left Margery and Mrs. True to explore his premises by themselves. With the result of that exploration Margery at first was well satisfied. Pine Clumps might be out of the world, but it was just as surely a beautiful world of itself; and Margery felt that she could rest there, and drop all her burdens, and cease from all her struggles. And in Pine Clumps, as in every other place, she could grow heavenward and Christ-like, if she would. Would she really will to do so?

Days and weeks went slowly and uneventfully by. Her parents sailed and crossed the ocean in safety. She met with no opposition now to keep her watchful, and no great temptations assailed her to make her prayerful.

She had come to one of life's quiet places, where nothing seemed to happen, and where she found as little apparently to help as to hinder her in her Christian course. And now what did Margery do?



Ah! her experience was much like Christian's in the arbor on the hill: much like our own, perhaps, in times when we have been free from trouble and had little to fear.

She sat down to rest, and soon, forgetting to watch, she fell asleep.

Her Bible slowly lost its interest. So many chapters a day, perhaps, were read from a sense of duty; but she did not linger over the words nor search for the precious truths that were hidden in them.

Prayer by degrees became a mere form,—the same words repeated night and morning, with little of earnestness, little of real heart asking in them.

She was lonely and sad; everything around her lost its interest, and daily she grew more homesick and more ready—though she did not know it—to yield to her parents' wishes.

One lovely May morning, as she stood on the door-step, Mr. Smith returned from the post-office and handed Margery a letter from her father. Eagerly she opened and read it, and then, with her face bright with excitement rushed up-stairs to the room where Mrs. True was quietly sewing.

"Oh, Mrs. True," she said, "come quick and help me pack. Father has sent for me to join them, and I am going; so we must hurry and get ready."



"But you cannot go to-day, Miss Margery," Mrs. True gently suggested.

"Yes, I can—to the city, at least. To-day is Wednesday; the next steamer, father writes, will sail Saturday, and a friend of his is going out, and will take care of me. Come, Mrs. True, do help me, for we have no time to waste."

In her usual calm, quiet manner, good Mrs. True arose and methodically folded her work.

"Miss Margery," she said while doing so, "I will do all I can to help, and I shall be very glad to have you join your parents if—it is really best you should."

"Best! of course it is best," Margery said, hurriedly. "Isn't it always best for a child to be with its parents?"

Mrs. True slowly shook her head. "Not always, Miss Margery. It may sound hard, but it is true, I have seen many a child who was best off when away from its parents. But this is sure, Miss Margery—it is always best for a Christian to keep close to Christ."

Margery stopped in the very act of folding a dress, but her purpose was not changed. "Well, can't I do that there as well as here?" she asked, impatiently.

"Yes—if you are strong enough. But when we pray 'lead us not into temptation' we must be careful, dearie, how we willfully walk into it. I



do not want to grieve you, Miss Margery, but have you considered and prayed over this matter as you ought? Will Mr. Hamilton let you go your own way now instead of requiring you to do his? Are there no conditions attached to your going?"

Margery dropped her dress and sat wearily down on the floor. Yes, she could not deny it, there were conditions.

Even while urging her to come to him, her father had plainly written, "Renounce your extreme, unreasonable notions and yield your will to mine." And Margery well knew that her father's will for her would not include the doing of Christ's will.

"Oh, dear, dear," she sobbed, "what shall I do?"

"Do nothing more to-day," Mrs. True wisely counseled. "Take time to think and pray about it, Miss Margery."

Sorrowfully Margery arose and took her hat and went out into the still, sweet beauty of the warm, summer-like day. Off among the old oaks, that now were one beautiful mass of delicate, tender green, she wandered, and, throwing herself down beside an old stump, she gave vent to all the bitterness in her heart. For a long time she lay there in the shelter of the protecting trees, struggling with her self-will and disappointment; but she grew calm at last.



A firm, quick step on the leaf-strewn ground disturbed her presently, and she sprang up just as a familiar voice said,—

“Good afternoon, Miss Margery. I hope I am not intruding. Mrs. True told me I would find you here.”

Margery’s sad, tear-stained face grew bright with pleasure.

“Mr. MacMillan,” she exclaimed, in a voice whose tone alone must have removed all that gentleman’s fears of being considered an intruder, “I am very glad to see you ; but how did you ever find me in these woods?”

“I am something like an Indian for following a trail, especially if it is a pleasant one,” Mr. MacMillan smilingly answered. “How do you do, Miss Margery?”

“Thank you, I am very well,” Margery said, indifferently, as if her health did not just then seem to her a matter of much consequence.

“I am glad to hear it ; left to myself, I might possibly have decided differently,” Mr. MacMillan said, kindly.

Margery made no reply, and in a moment he asked, “How do you like Pine Clumps, Miss Margery? Does it improve upon acquaintance?”

“I have not cultivated its acquaintance,” Margery said, in a sober voice.

“Are you sure you have not been making a mis-



take, then?" Mr. MacMillan gently questioned. "A quiet, country place like this often seems to me like a lovely character—the more you know of it, the more you will want to know. I only came down to the place last night," he quietly proceeded to explain, "and this morning, as soon as I could dispatch my business, I gave myself the pleasure of coming here, though I quite expected to be obliged to go away singing the old song,—

“ ‘ I only know she came and went. ’ ”

"No," Margery said, in the same sober tone in which she had spoken before; "I am still here."

"A self-evident fact that I cannot at this moment regret," Mr. MacMillan said, pleasantly; "but I hope you are enjoying your stay here."

"No; I do not think I am enjoying it at all."

As Margery spoke, Mr. MacMillan watched her with kind but intent eyes, while the expression of his face seemed to say that he had fully decided to do or know something. But if his next question was meant to be a leading one, it was asked with great apparent carelessness.

"Then why do you remain here, Miss Margery? Is it for health's or conscience's sake?"

Margery did not look at him. Slowly, as if she were trying to answer that question for herself, she said,—



“I thought once it was for conscience’s sake, but now—I am not sure.”

Mr. MacMillan was silent a moment; then he said,—

“Will you not give me the privilege of a friend, Miss Margery, and tell me what causes that painful doubt and uncertainty?”

Margery did not answer, and, after a little thoughtful consideration of her face, Mr. MacMillan said again, “When I saw you last Christmas, Miss Margery, you had just come—do you remember?—to the little spring at the foot of hill Difficulty. May I ask where you are now?”

“I don’t know,” Margery said, with a heavy sigh. “It seems as if the whole way were one long hill of difficulty.”

“What makes it so difficult?” If the question was very direct, it was also very kind, and Margery could not resist the voice that seemed at once to demand and plead for an answer, and in a few simple, truthful words she told the cause of her coming to Pine Clumps.

“Do you think I did wrong, Mr. MacMillan?” she asked, humbly, as she finished her story.

“Wrong to obey your Bible and honor your Saviour?” he said, with emphasis: “No.”

“But, then,” Margery said, earnestly, “you don’t know all yet, Mr. MacMillan. Do Christians ever decide on a right course, and then, when



they are fairly started on it, begin to lose heart and hope and interest, and feel that it would have been just as well if they had not gone quite so far? Because," she truthfully confessed, "I have been feeling so, and this morning I was tempted to give everything up and go out to father."

"Ah! I know now where you are," Mr. Mac-Millan said, in a voice that seemed touched with some deep feeling; "you have come to the arbor on the hill, Miss Margery, and you have done more than rest there. Like Christian, you have been sleeping there."

"I am afraid I have," Margery sadly acknowledged; "but you don't know how hard it was to keep awake."

"Don't I?" was the quick response. "It is only from my own experience I can understand yours, Miss Margery. You are not the only slumberer. Sometimes it seems to me that most of the Christians I meet are still sleeping in that arbor on the hill-side."

"How can they—for a long time—so many of them?" Margery slowly asked.

"Easily! There is little need of narcotics to lull them to that rest. They have no fear of danger to keep them alert and on their guard. They are engrossed with worldly cares and pleasures; soon they cease to feel their want of spiritual blessings. They begin to rest; before long they fall asleep,



and in the end—too often—their experience is the same as Christian's, when—as Bunyan says—in his sleep his roll fell out of his hand."

"But he found it again."

"Yes; but not without pain and tears, and not without treading 'those steps thrice over which he needed not to have trod but once.'"

"But," Margery timidly asked, "how can we help sleeping sometimes, Mr. MacMillan?"

"I know of but one way," he gravely answered. "By following the direction of the old hymn—

" 'Watch, for thou thy guard must keep,  
Pray, for God must speed thy way,  
Narrow is the road and steep,  
Therefore, Christian, watch and pray.' "

"Sometimes," Margery said, in a thoughtful voice, "sometimes, Mr. MacMillan, there doesn't seem much to watch against, nor even much to pray for. Things seem to stop happening, and then I think we grow discouraged. I believe," she added, in a low, half-frightened tone, "I believe I have felt sometimes, lately, as if God must have forgotten me, or else he would not leave me so lonely here."

"I understand," Mr. MacMillan kindly answered. "Miss Margery, I fear there are few Christians who have not at some time in their lives felt much as you describe. But the cause is to be found in their own want of faith, not in God's



lack of love. Do you remember Bunyan's story of Little-faith? I have often wondered why the robbers did not attack him here, in this arbor on the hill, instead of farther on. They were just the thieves to attack a sleeping or half-awake pilgrim."

"Who were they? I forget," Margery asked.

"The robbers? Two of them were Faint-heart and Distrust. They did not take from him all he had: the place where he kept his jewels they never ransacked, but they 'got most of his spending-money.'"

Margery turned a very earnest, wishful face towards Mr. MacMillan.

"I am afraid I do not quite understand it," she said, frankly. "Please tell me what the money was."

"You understand the meaning of the jewels?—his unbroken belief in his Saviour's atonement for his sins. Little-faith though he was, he kept that priceless treasure safe. But his spending-money—his daily hope, and joy, and comfort in God's sure love and tender guidance—Faint-heart and Distrust could not attack him—as they cannot us—without grasping that. And as the sad consequence, he went—as Bunyan quaintly says—'hungry the most part of the rest of the way.'"

"I did not understand that story when I read it," Margery confessed; "but I shall never forget it now."



“It is a good story to remember,” Mr. MacMillan answered, “and it is also good, Miss Margery, for us to remember Bunyan’s moral,—‘When, therefore, we hear that such robberies are done on the King’s highway, two things become us to do: First, to go out harnessed, and to be sure to take a shield with us; and, second, it is good also that we desire of the king a convoy, yea, that he will go with us himself.’ And if *he* is with us, Miss Margery, none can set on us to do us harm.”

“Sometimes,” Margery said, in a few minutes, breaking the pleasant silence that had followed Mr. MacMillan’s last words, “sometimes I have thought that perhaps it would have been better if I had complied with my parents’ wishes. Couldn’t I have pleased them and lived as they wished, and yet have been a Christian in heart?”

“You would soon have ceased to be a Christian in heart, I fear,” was the kind but grave answer. “It is that half-following of Christ that makes the Christian life such a struggle; and the poor, human heart that thinks it can serve the world and still be true to Christ, will soon, like the man with the muck-rake that the pilgrims saw in the interpreter’s house, grow indifferent to the proffered crown, and find itself able to ‘look no way but downwards.’”

“There is one thing more that troubles me,” Margery confessed soon. “Mr. MacMillan, you



know the things my friends wanted me to do ? A great many people do those very things every day, without the slightest suspicion or fear that they are doing wrong. And now, please tell me if Christ really does disapprove of such actions ? Why are there not in our Bibles positive commands about them ?”

“ Oh, you are asking the old question so many have stumbled over,” Mr. MacMillan quietly answered. “ Miss Margery, we have nothing to do with ‘ the great many other people.’ We are not called upon to judge them, or to decide this question for them ; but I do not think it ever long troubles any one who really wants to honor Christ. I think there are commands quite full and broad enough to cover all these ‘ things.’ Christians are to ‘ come out from the world and be separate ;’ they are to keep themselves unspotted from the world. Can they do this, and yet conform, without reserve, entirely to the customs of the world ? A soldier’s uniform declares, so plainly that none can mistake it, to what nation and army he belongs ; and surely it is not too much to ask that, with equal clearness, a Christian’s life should declare that he belongs to Christ. Christians are Christ’s friends ; he trusts his honor to us ; and if we truly love him, we will—for his sake—‘ abstain from all appearance of evil,’ and wherever things seem doubtful, we will give our Lord the benefit of that doubt.”



"I seem fated to be always on the wing, Miss Margery, when I meet you," Mr. MacMillan said, when, a little later, he stood with Margery by her door-step. "I am sorry to say good-by now; but I have no choice, as I return to the city to-morrow morning. I have, however, I hope, some good news for you. I came down to make the final arrangements for some warm friends of yours—and mine—who are coming the first of June to Pine Clumps for the summer. Now are you enough of a Yankee to guess who they are?"

"My friends and yours," Margery repeated; "why it must be Miss Kathie for one."

"Yes, Miss Kathie for one, Professor Carter for two; my mother for the third, and fourthly and lastly, but not, I trust, leastly, myself."

It seemed to Margery as if a great cloud had suddenly been rolled away from her sky.

"I cannot believe it. It seems too good to be true!" she exclaimed.

"Nay, rather say it is just good enough to be true. Don't you know, Miss Margery, that our Father loves to prepare pleasant surprises for his children?"

And leaving that thought with Margery as his farewell word, Mr. MacMillan departed.



## CHAPTER IX.

### IN THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL.

“But while he was thus bewailing his unhappy miscarriage, he lift up his eyes, and behold ! there was a very stately palace before him, the name of which was Beautiful, and it stood just by the highway side.”—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

MARGERY'S first act that afternoon, after Mr. MacMillan left, was to write her father. It was a sorrowful letter and cost her many tears, for Margery fully understood now that she could not go to her parents, and that in truth they would not allow her to go to them, unless she was prepared to submit to their wishes ; and knowing that, her course was plain : she must remain where she was. But she did not reach that decision without a second painful struggle. And the old homesick longing was never stronger than when she sealed the letter containing her final answer to her father.

The fact that her friends were coming soon was the one bright sunbeam in her sky, but ten long days must pass first, and though Margery was out



of the arbor now, she found those ten days very sad and weary ones.

With eager impatience she counted the days to the first of June. It came at last. A fair, sunshiny day, as perfect as cloudless skies, fields white with daisies, orchards one drifting mass of apple-blossom snow, and woods merry with bird-songs and fragrant with wild flowers, could make it.

Mr. Smith had business at the station that morning, he told Margery, and would take her to meet her friends, and with a light heart she climbed into the old box-wagon and started for her drive through the sandy but pleasant forest road. They had not gone far, however, when a pretty, little phaeton approached them, and Mr. Smith rather ungraciously observed,—

“Hope that air lady in that kerridge will know us next time she sees us, Miss Margery. It’s sartin she oughter, if starin’ is a good way to get knowledge.”

Just then a merry voice called out,—

“Where are you going, my prettie maid?”

And with a spring, almost before Mr. Smith could stop his slow steed, Margery was out of the wagon.

“Oh, Miss Kathie, Miss Kathie!” she cried, “is it really you? Oh, I cannot tell you how glad I am.”

“Never mind; what you cannot tell I will imagine,” Miss Kathie said, in her own bright way.



“I was just on my way to see you, Margery; so jump in beside me, and I will carry you where you were going.”

“You won’t have to carry me very far, then,” Margery said, with a happy laugh, as, after a word to Mr. Smith, she obeyed Miss Woodward; “I was only going to meet you.”

“So I sagely suspected. Turn your face and let me look at you. I want to see whether you are most in need of my kisses or scoldings. I have been feeling very anxious about you lately, little girl, do you know it?”

“Because I have not written?” Margery asked.

“Partly that, and partly because some one else has talked,” Miss Kathie said, with a smile. “But I think you look pretty well, and now I am here I will try to take good care of you—if nobody else does. By the way, what do you think of this fine plan of ours, of spending the summer here—in Pine Clumps?”

“Think of it?” Margery exclaimed, while her face glowed with pleasure. “Miss Kathie, I believe it is one of God’s plans; I believe he has sent you here.”

“I believe he has,” Miss Kathie answered, gently. “It is almost as great a surprise to me as to you, Margery, and yet it has all come about very naturally—just as God’s plans usually do come to pass. I was not well after you left school, and the



doctor said I must stop teaching. And then uncle John—that is Professor Carter, you know—said he wanted me for a housekeeper, as auntie is something of an invalid. And the next important word to be said was the doctor's decree that we all needed a change, and must go somewhere near the sea, if not right on the shore; and the morning you came here Mr. MacMillan came down to see about renting for us a house belonging to one of uncle's friends."

"Mr. MacMillan has been down once since," Margery remarked.

"Yes, to make some final arrangements. And yesterday I came down with the servants to get everything ready for the family, who are coming to-night."

"Does Professor Carter himself come to-night?"

"Yes, and his wife and Mrs. MacMillan. For you must understand that Mrs. Carter and Mrs. MacMillan are sisters. Ours is one of those mixed family relationships that are as perplexing as a Chinese puzzle to trace out."

"Are there any children?"

"No. At present you will be the child of the family, and I hope you like your prospective position."

"Indeed I do," Margery said with decision. "In fact, Miss Kathie, I wish I was really a child. I don't like being grown up at all."



“Why not, Margery?”

“Because,” Margery soberly answered, while Miss Kathie let her gentle horse walk leisurely along the sweet-scented woodland road, “because one has such a sense of responsibility when once grown up, Miss Kathie. We have to decide so many questions for ourselves, that life begins to seem real and earnest, and so different from the pretty play we fancied it was when we were children.”

“And yet the child that never outgrows the nursery never begins to know the beauty and value of the inheritance to which he is born, Margery.”

“No,” Margery rather dolefully assented; “but he never begins to know its trials and burdens either.”

Miss Kathie laughed. “Shall I scold you?” she asked, “or shall I leave that pleasant duty to some of your other friends? Margery, I am afraid you have been looking too much on your life’s dark side lately, and, my dear, you must not do that any longer. There is a dark side to all our lives; at least”—and, in spite of herself, Miss Kathie’s sweet voice grew a trifle sadder—“at least, we can usually find a shadow when we look for it; but the dark side—in a Christian’s life—is never the Godward side. And, Margery, I must say to you, to-day, what I often have to say to



myself: turn your face towards God and you will soon cease to see the shadows. Do you know where you are going now?" Miss Kathie asked the next minute, as she turned into a beautiful winding road, where the old pines made a pleasant twilight, even on that bright, summer day.

"I am going with you," Margery said, in a voice full of content.

"Very true. You are also going to Wind-love, the name of our new home."

"What an odd name, Miss Kathie! It sets one to dreaming of hurricanes at once."

"It is a very appropriate name, though, as I think you will own when you have once felt the winds that I believe never cease to blow there. But they are only health-giving winds, Margery, and I do not think you need have any fear of them, even in your dreams. Here we are,"—and Miss Kathie stopped before a beautiful Queen Anne cottage, standing quite by itself on a high bluff, and commanding a wonderful view of the bay and sea and shadowy woods and broad, green farming lands that lay around it,—“here we are; and now, Margery, you and I will have a pleasant visit together, until the ‘evening brings all hame.’”

The beautiful day soon passed, and when the six o'clock train came in, it found Margery and Miss Woodward waiting at the station for their friends. Burdened with shawl-straps, books and



wraps, the travelers gathered on the platform, and for a few moments all was bustle and excitement. There was a gentleman in Professor Carter's party who was introduced to Margery as Mr. Trinot, and whose appearance, she saw at once, was a great surprise to Miss Woodward; but whether the surprise was a pleasant or sorrowful one, Margery could not at first decide.

"We ran across Hugh on Broadway," Professor Carter explained, "and I insisted on his coming down to spend the Sabbath with us, Kathie, for I felt sure your housekeeping could bear the strain of one unexpected guest."

"Its machinery must be in very poor working order if it cannot," Miss Kathie answered, pleasantly; but her smile was a little tremulous, and through all the cheerful homeward ride she was very quiet and, as Margery at least fancied, a little sad.

The next day was the Sabbath. The whole earth seemed to lie still and to be at rest when, in the morning, after an early breakfast, Margery took her Bible and went to her favorite seat on the old stone door-step. That old door-step was beginning to seem to Margery the most homelike place about the house; she had read and studied and felt so much while sitting there. The nearest church was four miles away, and since coming to Pine Clumps she had never been able to attend it.



She thought of it regretfully that morning, but she was too happy to sigh long over any deprivation, and opening her little Bible, she was soon musing over a favorite passage. She was still reading when a shadow fell across her book, and the next instant Mr. MacMillan said,—

“Good morning, Miss Margery, between that book and this sky and water, I do not know that you can possibly want anything else.”

Margery’s face was as humble as her answer.

“I want a great deal more,” she said, “and I believe I want, most of all, an understanding mind. Some things in the Bible are very hard to understand, Mr. MacMillan.”

“Yes, some of them. So hard that you never will understand them here, Miss Margery. But what of that? True faith is humble and does not fret against her limitations. She knows that the veil must always hang before the Holy of Holies in this life, but she knows, too, that God’s revelations—when they come—will satisfy, and knowing that, faith—can wait.”

“Yes,” Margery said, with simple truthfulness, “and so can I, Mr. MacMillan, for the knowledge beyond my reach. It is for what I might have that I am hungry. There is a great deal in the Bible that we can understand if we study.”

“Granted,” Mr. MacMillan answered, with a smile. “Study all you can, Miss Margery, but



with the patience of humility, not with the impatience of a pride that rebels at every obstacle. Begin with what you do understand. Make of that a foundation so strong and sure that no doubts can shake it, and then, with the best helps you can get, go lovingly and prayerfully on. Only be sure that in all your Bible study, faith stands by you as you turn the pages. And now, do you wish to read all the morning or would you like to attend church?"

"Church!" and Margery looked at him in great surprise. "The church is four miles away, Mr. MacMillan."

"Is the distance your only objection? If you will come with me, I will not take you far enough to tire you."

"Where will you take me?" Margery asked, as she closed her book.

"This is just the day for an open-air sermon," he answered; "but I believe I shall have to take you inside the old school-house, and if you will get ready, Miss Margery, I will wait for you here."

"I won't keep you waiting long," Margery promised, as she went in quest of her hat and gloves.

"Who is to preach, Mr. MacMillan?" she asked on her return; "Mrs. True and Mrs. Smith want to know."

He smiled as he met her earnest eyes.



"Would you be willing to listen to me?" he asked, quietly,

"You, Mr. MacMillan." And Margery did not need to say more; for if her words were few, her voice and face made full amends.

That morning service in the old school-house was very simple and impressive, and at its conclusion, as Mr. MacMillan was detained by some of his hearers, Margery joined her other friends, and walked with them along the beautiful, winding path that led to Wind-love.

"Where do you feel as if you had been this morning, uncle John?" Miss Kathie asked of Professor Carter, who was walking beside Mr. Trinot.

"In the house Beautiful," Professor Carter promptly answered. "I believe I could not well be anywhere else when with Archibald MacMillan."

"Archibald does seem to have a wonderful power over his hearers," Mr. Trinot, remarked in a slightly puzzled tone. "I do not know that he has any more ability than most other men, but there is a remarkable fascination about him. What causes it?"

"If we were really in the house Beautiful at this moment," Professor Carter said, with a smile, "this is the way your question would be answered, Hugh,—‘But that which put such grace and



glory into all he did, was, that he did it out of pure love to his country.' And by 'country' you will please to understand the heaven in which Archibald MacMillan believes with all his soul, and where he hopes, some day, to meet the King whom he now so devotedly serves."

Mr. Trinot thrust the little cane he was carrying impatiently down among the pine-needles that carpeted the path.

"If there really were any good foundation for such a faith, I should not wonder so much at it," he said. "But it all seems so visionary, so improbable and impracticable, that it fills me with wonder to see such a man as Archibald MacMillan endorsing it."

"He is not alone," Miss Kathie quietly remarked. "Uncle John believes the same. And so"—she added, with a slight, firm emphasis—"do I."

Mr. Trinot turned towards her with a quick, peculiar look. "Yes, I know you do," he said, with a little bitterness; "you never suffer me to forget it. But you might have a little compassion on those who cannot believe." Miss Kathie did not answer; but Margery saw the old sorrowful expression she had seen once or twice before flit across her face; and she saw, too, that Professor Carter looked sadly at both his niece and friend for an instant, before he said,—



“If you really cannot believe, Hugh, then certainly the Bible is unjust in its requirements, for it commands ‘men everywhere to believe.’ But it is not that you cannot, Hugh; it is simply that you will not. You prefer to remain a prisoner in Doubting Castle, though you know there is ‘a key’ that—if you would use it—would quickly unlock every bolt and door.”

“If I do it from preference,” Mr. Trinot said, bitterly, “it certainly cannot be said that I find much pleasure or happiness in my choice. But I don’t know as religion makes any difference in that respect. Life is full of vexations and annoyances, turn where you will. Now, show me—if you can—one happy man.”

“I am one,” Professor Carter answered.

Mr. Trinot turned towards him. “Oh, yes,” he said, sarcastically; “I beg your pardon. I ought to have said present company excepted.”

“You may look, then, at Archibald Mac Millan.”

“Do you call him happy? I know that he has had more than one bitter disappointment. All those long months, spent in attendance on his uncle, when he ought to have been completing his studies, were certainly a great trial for his patience; and here he is now—when he is longing to begin his life-work—condemned to lay aside all his own wishes, because his uncle insists on going abroad again in the autumn and cannot live with-



out him. Considering that his uncle's property is all entailed, and that he has nothing to gain by his unselfishness, it is—I confess—noble ; but does it make him happy?

“Ask Archie, himself,” Miss Kathie said ; “here he comes now.”

“Ask what?” Mr. MacMillan said, pleasantly, as he came up with his friends.

“A very impertinent question, I fear,” Mr. Trinot answered ; “but, nevertheless, at Miss Kathie's bidding, I will ask it. We have just been speaking of you, Archibald. Professor Carter says you live in the house Beautiful,—you know and share his fondness, I believe, for that old allegory,—and I said you had trials like other men, and were probably just as unhappy. And now will you be kind enough to answer truthfully and say what you are?”

Mr. MacMillan looked thoughtfully at his friend. “Why not suppose that I am at least as happy as other men, Hugh?” he asked. “Why always give the darkest color possible to your statements?”

“Because I believe in stating them truthfully,” Mr. Trinot answered, shortly. “But why don't you answer that question? Are you trying to evade it?”

“No; I hope not. I have no need to do so. You say I have trials. Yes; for my father deals



with me as with a child. You ask if I am happy? Yes; for I have never known—I never shall know—a trial in which God has not been and will not be able to comfort me.”

“And so you can rise above all the vexations and annoyances that meet you and call yourself happy. And I must own you appear so. But I would like to know by what alchemy you do it?”

“We all know ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ pretty well,” Mr. MacMillan said, while for a moment his eyes glanced smilingly at Margery. “Now let me give you Christian’s answer when asked, in the house Beautiful, ‘Can you remember by what means you find your annoyances, at times, as if they were vanquished?’ ‘Yes; when I think what I saw at the cross, that will do it; and when I look upon my brodered coat, that will do it; also when I look into the roll that I carry in my bosom, that will do it; and when my thoughts wax warm about whither I am going, that will do it.’”

Mr. Trinot shook his head. “If you really do believe as you say,” he said in a despondent voice, “then I suppose you truly do feel so. But it is all an inscrutable mystery to me. I cannot understand it.”

“Doubting Castle is a dark place. I fear you never will understand it until you come forth into the sunshine of God’s love,” Mr. MacMillan answered, in a gentle but serious tone.



"Miss Margery," he said, in a moment, "do you know this little flower?" and he stooped to pick a dainty blossom growing by the road-side.

"It is the arethusa, isn't it?" Margery asked, as she took it in her hand and looked at it with eyes that still seemed to be seeing something far beyond it.

"Yes. Have you studied botany? The flora in these woods is very beautiful, I think?"

"Is it? I don't know," Margery said, a little absently. Then, as she dropped the delicate flower, she asked, earnestly, "Mr. MacMillan, please tell me what is the house Beautiful?"

Mr. MacMillan smiled a little. "I do not know precisely what Bunyan meant by it," he answered, thoughtfully; "but it stood just at the top of the hill Difficulty; and I believe Christians are always in it when, after testimony lovingly and faithfully borne for their Master, they come to some glad resting-place where they meet with Christian sympathy, and are conscious of their Saviour's love and approval."

"If only then they could stay in it and never go out," Margery said, with a little sigh.

With kind, compassionate eyes Mr. MacMillan looked at the fair, young face Margery innocently turned towards him. He understood, far better than she did, the temptations and trials that might befall her in the future; and he remem-



bered, too, that if, as some one has said, the house Beautiful stood at the summit of the hill Difficulty as a reward for Christian's perseverance in overcoming its hardships, it stood also just before the descent into the valley of humiliation; and he well knew that no human care could spare Margery from passing through that valley. He remembered it all, but he only said,—

“When Christiana and Mercy went forth from the house Beautiful, Miss Margery, do you remember how Great-heart, armed with his sword, with its ‘right Jerusalem blade,’ went before them as their guide?”

“Yes,” Margery answered, soberly. “And if we could only see Great-heart going before us, it would make things seem very much easier—sometimes.”

“Faith's sight is sometimes very dim,” Mr. MacMillan said, kindly; “but when it is strong enough to look through the glass that the pilgrims saw on the Delectable Mountains, she can always see one stronger and safer than Great-heart going before her.”

“He may lead us far away from the house Beautiful, though,” Margery rather sorrowfully suggested.

“I know. But whatever the road may be, his promises, like these beautiful flowers,”—and Mr. MacMillan stooped to pick another dainty blos-



som,—“brighten every step of the way. Hear this one, now, Miss Margery,” and as they strolled slowly along the sweet, old forest-path, Mr. Mac-Millan softly repeated, “‘I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, . . . and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods, . . . and none shall make them afraid.’”



## CHAPTER X.

### THE TWO LIONS.

“Now, before he had gone far, he entered into a very narrow passage. . . . And looking very narrowly before him as he went, he espied two lions in the way.”—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

AS, sometimes, after a violent storm, there is a season of fine weather, before the clouds again return after the rain, so now in Margery's life there came a short time of pure, undisturbed enjoyment.

There was nothing in the present to trouble her, and Margery even began to hope that the disagreement between her parents and herself would soon be happily reconciled; for, in replying to her letter, Mr. Hamilton had expressed no anger at her not joining them, but had only written that the summer months would soon pass, and with the beginning of autumn he trusted they would once more be altogether in their own home. And Margery was in happy ignorance of his words to her mother,—

“It is useless to try to pull her our way now,  
(195)



when we are three thousand miles from her; but when we are once more at home, if she still refuses to obey us, I will compel her to do as we wish. There are invisible, as well as visible, chains with which to force people in the direction you wish them to go. And I am by no means sure that the invisible chains are not the strongest."

Margery knew nothing of the chains, either visible or invisible, that her parents were forging for her; and so, for awhile, the days and weeks went by with nothing to mar their peace.

But a sky without a cloud is rarely seen, and a period of unbroken sunshine seldom lasts long. And soon again, for Margery, there came a sharp reminder that she was in the world, and would not be suffered to walk without a conflict along the "King's highway." She was at Wind-love one sunny morning, when Mr. MacMillan returned from the post-office.

"What will you give me for a letter, Miss Margery?" he asked, playfully.

"Perhaps I can tell better after I have read it, and know its worth," Margery said, as she extended her hand.

"Prudent Miss Margery! I do not believe you will ever be tempted into unsafe speculations," Mr. MacMillan said, with a smile. "Well, you shall have your letter gratis. I hope it will give you pleasure only." And handing her the letter,



Mr. MacMillan sat down to read his own dispatches.

Margery recognized the writing on her envelope at once. It was Laura's. Since she left school she had not written to her, and with a half-wish that she had refrained now, Margery broke the seal.

To her surprise it was dated at Quantuck.

"Dear Margery," it began :

"Here we are at dear old Quantuck again,—mamma and I,—and we are having the gayest and best time imaginable. Your brother Clifford is here, and my cousin, Mr. Stevenson, so you will understand that I do not want for attention. We have hops almost every night, and I have 'lots' of pretty new dresses, and I heard yesterday that I was voted the belle of Quantuck. Now, isn't that something to be proud of?

"I believe I do look prettier than I ever did before, for I've learned a new way of arranging my hair, and I can see for myself—without making use of other folks' eyes—that it's 'awful' becoming; and when I see you I'll show you how to arrange yours,—that is, if you are not too much of a Puritan to give me that pleasure. Truly, Margery, if you were only what you used to be, I should wish you were here. Clifford and I were talking about you last night, and we both agreed that you'd be a sister to be proud of, if you were only a little more like the rest of the world. But Clifford said he 'hadn't any use'—that's slang, of course, but you must own it's expressive—"for a psalm-singing sister;" and to own the truth, Margery, I am quite of his mind. This world is a very pleasant place,—at least, I think it is,—and I don't



see any sense in forever thinking and talking about another. When we go to heaven,—I frankly confess I am willing to defer that journey as long as possible,—why, we will do, I suppose, as they do in heaven. But while we are in Rome,—well, of course you know that old adage, so I needn't lengthen my letter by quoting it, and will only observe in passing, my dear, that I think you would be a much more sensible girl if you would consider and act upon it a little. And that wise observation brings me to the purpose for which I am writing this letter.

"We have come to the conclusion—Clifford, cousin Rich. (that is Mr. Stevenson, you know ; it's funny that he should be rich in name and rich in purse, too, isn't it?) and last, not least, your humble correspondent—that we want to see you. It is just a beautiful sail from Quantuck to Pine Clumps, they tell us, and so we have decided to sail up on Thursday and take dinner with you. We will bring our own delicacies, and we will have an Arcadian repast somewhere under the trees.

"And now, my dear, I want to beg you as a sister—you know I really may be that some day—to drown all your disagreeable scruples about right and wrong for one day, at least, in the bay, and let us have a real gay, lively time. We are none of us, I hope, very dreadful sinners ; but don't, for pity's sake, insist on our being saints, and don't try to be one yourself ; for this world never has cared very much for its saints, and, between ourselves, I don't believe it ever will.

"Clifford has just invited me to take a drive with him, so I cannot at present bestow any more of my 'sweetness' and light upon you.

"Good-by, my dear ; don't you envy me my good times? Your affectionate friend,—if you will only be sensible,—

"LAURA STANTON."



It was with a very sober face that Margery read her letter, and then slowly folded it and replaced it in its envelope. She remembered—with an involuntary wish that she could delay its dawning—that the next day would be Thursday, and she shrank with real dread from the visit that was promised her.

“What is the matter, Miss Margery?” Mr. MacMillan asked presently, as he looked up from his paper and noticed her serious face. “I am interested in that letter, you know; hasn’t my gift proved as pleasant as I hoped?”

“Pleasant,” Margery said, with a sad little smile. “I suppose I ought to call it pleasant; but I am afraid I cannot.”

“And what causes the strife between duty and inclination now?” Mr. MacMillan asked, kindly.

Margery could not trust herself to explain, and instead of answering his question, after a few moments’ thoughtful study of the blue, beautiful water spread before them, she said,—

“Mr. MacMillan, please tell me why, when God commands us to be good and do right and”—and Margery’s voice trembled sadly now—“honor him, he sometimes makes it so hard for us to obey him? I should think he would clear all the obstacles out of our path; but, instead of that, it seems, often, as if he really hedged up our way. It is very hard. Why does he do so?”



“Because he loves us,” Mr. MacMillan gravely answered; “and also, Miss Margery, because, in this school, in which he is educating us, we can only grow strong by brave resistance of wrong, only beautiful through patient endurance of trouble.”

“And God loves us just as much when he lets trouble come as when he gives us pleasure?” Margery rather doubtfully asked.

“Just as much ; it may be more,” Mr. MacMillan answered, in a voice that was strangely touched and gentle. “We love those best, Miss Margery, for whose perfection we are most anxious, and if our eyes were only clear, as faith’s sight is always privileged to be, we would see, stamped in letters of gold on all our trials and sorrows, this one sure reason for them all—this is the will of God, even your perfection.”

Margery did not answer those earnest words, but they swept her doubts away ; and, cheered and encouraged, she went home to prepare for her visitors.

The next day was unusually beautiful, even for that season, “when, if ever, come beautiful days.” Sunshine and warm, favorable winds combined to make the weather all that a sailing-party could desire, and Margery felt sure that Clifford and Laura would come, as they had promised ; and, cheerfully, though with a little secret fear, she made all her



arrangements for their pleasure and comfort. Out under the cool shade of the pleasant oaks a table was carefully spread, and, when all was done, Margery looked with satisfaction on her work, and then walked down to the shore. The beautiful sail-boat had already touched the white, gravelly beach, and in another minute Mrs. Stanton and Laura were beside her.

"You see, little Puritan, we have really come," Laura said, as she kissed her. "Why, Margery, how well you look! What have you been doing to get such a beautiful color?"

"I've been getting ready for you," Margery answered, playfully.

"Ah! Then the color is really an illumination in honor of us. Cousin Rich., I hope you are satisfied?"

"With what?" Mr. Stevenson asked; "with Miss Margery's appearance? I assure you I was never anything but satisfied with that."

"There's a pretty compliment for you, Margery," Laura said, with a careless laugh. "I trust you appreciate it."

Margery's cheeks were certainly illumined now. "How dare he be so personal!" she thought, indignantly, "and how can Laura be so frivolous! Oh, dear! if this is the beginning of the day, what will its ending be?" But Margery could not answer her own question; and, in a moment, she pleas-



antly proposed that they should go up to the house.

"Go up to that old house?" Clifford answered. "What for, Margery? you are not putting on your dignity, are you?"

"No; no more than is pretty and becoming," Mrs. Stanton said, in a tone and manner that made Margery still more uncomfortable.

"What would you have us do at the house, Margery?" Laura asked. "Sit around on straight-backed chairs and recite the catechism to you?"

"No," Margery said. "I have no wish to hear lessons that I know are not well learned."

"There you have got your answer now, Laura," Mr. Stevenson said, with a laugh. "Miss Margery, 'pon my word, you have a beautiful retreat here; but don't you find it very lonely?"

"Come up under the oaks," Margery said, as she led the way towards the grove. "No; I do not find it lonely, Mr. Stevenson; at least not now."

"Why not as much now as ever, Margery?" Clifford asked, curiously, as the little company reached the oaks and sat down under their shade.

"Because," Margery rather unwillingly explained, "I have friends who live only a mile from here."

"Friends," Clifford echoed, scornfully. "What friends? I hope you haven't been making the



acquaintance of all the ploughmen and blackberry-pickers around here, have you?"

"You would have no reason to feel disgraced if I had, Clifford. The people around here are all intelligent and respectable."

"All sing psalms and go to prayer-meeting, I suppose. That is your idea of being respectable, isn't it, Margery?"

"Stop, Clifford; you sha'n't tease her," Laura interposed. "Margery, please tell me, who are those new friends of yours?"

"Do you remember Professor Carter, Laura, and Miss Woodward?"

"Professor Carter. Have you run across him again?" Laura asked, in an annoyed tone. "And Miss Woodward, the teacher at Madame Girard's, I suppose you mean. Well, Margery, I cannot congratulate you on your new friends, for I believe they have been the cause of all your trouble."

"If they are the cause, I would like to have them in my power for a few minutes!" Clifford exclaimed. "Margery, I cannot, for the life of me, imagine what a bright, pretty girl like you can find to care for in such long-faced, sanctimonious hypocrites, as I presume these so-called friends of yours are."

"Clifford," Margery said, in a hurt, quick voice, "you neither know what nor whom you are talking about. Please remember that Professor Car-



ter and Miss Woodward are among the best and truest friends I have."

"Ah! That's a compliment to present company," Clifford scornfully replied.

Margery's lips quivered; there came a painful choking in her throat, and the hot tears filled her eyes. For a moment she struggled hard for self-control, and the silent prayer went up for grace to be meek and patient. It was but for a moment: even while she prayed the victory came, and, with a smile, she looked up and said, pleasantly,—

"Let me give you something better than compliments, Clifford. What do you say to having lunch now? You must be hungry after your long sail."

"Ravenous, Miss Margery," Mr. Stevenson declared.

"Yes, we are hungry, and thirsty too," Clifford added.

"You need not be thirsty long," Margery said, laughingly; "we are not quite in the melancholy plight of the ancient mariner, 'with water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink,' Clifford."

"You may keep your water," was Clifford's cool answer, as he took a little flask, in the shape of a book, from his pocket. "See, this is my Bible, Margery; how do you like it?"

"Clifford,"—and Margery's face grew pale and she looked at her brother with an almost terrified



expression,—“Clifford, you don’t mean that you carry that with you in your pocket?”

“Carry it everywhere. Didn’t I tell you it was my Bible? You would not have me forget and leave my Bible at home, would you?”

“Clifford, please don’t talk so. What would father say if he saw that?”

“You can probably find every word he would say in the dictionary,” Clifford coolly replied. “Our father speaks English, you know.”

“But, Clifford, it is wrong, and father would be so troubled and displeased.”

“Think so?” Clifford asked, indifferently. “Well, now, see here, Margery, I hardly believe he could be more displeased with me than he is with you; and as long as he objects to your going in one direction, he cannot very consistently blame me for going in the opposite.” And with great composure Clifford opened his flask and offered it to Mr. Stevenson.

Margery could say and see no more. She walked to her table and stood there for a few seconds looking with sorrowful eyes at the beautiful pond-lilies with which she had adorned it. Laura soon followed her.

“Why, Margery,” she said, “I do believe you are crying. What a little goose you are!”

“Oh, Laura,”—and Margery turned pleadingly towards her,—“you have great power over



Clifford; won't you try to influence him for good?"

"When I see anything very objectionable in his conduct, perhaps I will," Laura coldly answered.

Margery made no reply, and in a minute Laura said, angrily, "Margery, if I only had the strength, it would do me good to give you a good shaking. You are the most ridiculous girl I ever heard of. Here you are, spoiling all our pleasure, and grieving over Clifford, just as if a flask in a man's pocket was like a death-warrant."

"I am afraid it is more like one than you think," Margery said, tearfully. "Clifford will never become a Christian while he does such things."

"Oh, well, perhaps he thinks one Christian in the family quite enough. I am sure I do," Laura said, with a curl of her lip, as she turned to unpack the large baskets that had just been brought up from the boat.

Margery had no wish to prolong the conversation; silently she aided Laura in her preparations, and when all was ready she went to find Clifford and Mr. Stevenson.

"Come, Clifford," she said, affectionately, as she linked her arm inside her brother's, "lunch is ready; won't you and Mr. Stevenson come?"

Clifford scowled a little, but showed no disposi-



tion to refuse the invitation, and in a few minutes the little party was seated around the table.

"This is truly like life in Eden," Mr. Stevenson said, as he helped himself to a sandwich.

"Better not say that," Laura observed, as Clifford just then uncorked a bottle of champagne, "or Margery will tell you that they did not drink wine in Eden."

"I have no doubt but Miss Margery's information would be correct," Mr. Stevenson answered, as he deliberately filled his glass, "and I am quite ready to hear it, as long as she does not ask me to act upon it."

"I am sure Margery would not be so hard-hearted as to ask you to do anything involving as great self-denial as that," Mrs. Stanton said, with her smooth, light laugh. "You do not want to ask anything as hard as that would be of him; do you, Margery?"

Margery was troubled about Clifford, and tired of all the silly, frivolous talk to which she was forced to listen.

"No, Mrs. Stanton," she answered quickly, and, with an emphasis that told more plainly than words how weary and indifferent she was: "I do not want to ask anything of him."

"I am certainly flattered," Mr. Stevenson said, with a forced laugh.

"Is that what you call Christian politeness,



Margery?" Laura asked, in a pretended whisper; "because if it is, I must say I admire its consideration for the feelings of others."

"I beg pardon," Margery said, humbly; "if I have said anything wrong, I did not mean to."

"It is perfectly astonishing, Margery," Clifford said, in an angry voice, "how many wrong things you manage to do, while you are all the while deluding yourself with the fancy that you are doing right. For example, you know you would not be here at this moment if you had not positively refused to obey our father, and that—forsooth—is what you call doing right."

"Can't we find something pleasant to talk about?" Margery said, while she made a great effort to be calm and pleasant.

"Mr. Stevenson, please forgive me if I have been rude, and tell me something about what you are doing in Quantuck, won't you?"

Mr. Stevenson felt and behaved at that moment very much like a spoiled and sulky school-boy.

"I am afraid my description would hardly interest you, Miss Hamilton," he said, crossly; "if you do not care to ask anything of me, you can hardly, I should suppose, care to hear anything from me."

Once, if Mr. Stevenson had presumed to speak



to Margery in that manner, she would have given him the answer he richly deserved; but now she was silent; and Laura, as she bestowed on her cousin a generous dish of ice-cream, exclaimed,—

“There, Rich. now that you have paid Margery in her own coin, do let us have peace. And, Margery, now I will tell you why we have come here to-day; we want you to go back with us. You have indulged yourself and gone your own way long enough, we think; now we want you to indulge us and come our way; will you?”

“I cannot,” Margery answered. “Father placed me here.”

“That’s all nonsense,” Clifford interrupted. “Your stay here depends entirely upon yourself. If there are conditions, you imposed them on yourself. Renounce those conditions, Margery, and you are free to do what you please.”

“I cannot renounce them, Clifford.”

Clifford frowned fiercely. “Mrs. Stanton,” he said, “I wish you could bestow on this idiotic sister of mine a few grains of common sense. She is ruining her own happiness and ours, too.”

“I know, and I am very sorry for you, Clifford,” Mrs. Stanton said, in her smooth, bland voice; “but common sense is something like the practice of medicine: people seldom become noted for either without long experience.”

“Margery,” and—like Mrs. Timorous address-



ing Christiana—Mrs. Stanton turned now to Margery, “some day, when you have grown sensible, and understand the value of all you are now throwing away, you will bitterly regret your folly. You will never be young again; take my advice, my dear, and enjoy your youth while you have it.”

“I am enjoying it, Mrs. Stanton.”

“So I should judge from your looks,” Laura said, scornfully, as she watched Margery’s troubled face and tearful eyes. “Well, Margery, I suppose it is useless to talk; but you are welcome to your enjoyment, if that is the right name for such insanity as yours.”

“Oh, don’t, don’t talk to me any more,” Margery pleaded, in a choking voice.

Mr. Stevenson pushed back his chair. “Come, Clifford,” he said, “I think we better see about going home.” And acting promptly on his own suggestion, Mr. Stevenson strolled down to the shore, and soon returned to say that the boat was ready, and the wind falling, and that the captain advised them to start at once.

“Well, Margery,” Clifford said when, a little later, they all stood on the shore, “if you would go with us, and do as we wish, I would be a kind, good brother to you; but as long as you persist in your present course, you need not expect to receive any sympathy from me. I have heard you say that you dreaded to be criticised and ridiculed, but



such ridiculous conduct as yours deserves the ridicule and criticism of all sensible people, and you may be sure it will always have mine." And with this affectionate assurance, Clifford took his seat, the boat pushed off and Margery's troubled day was over.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PORTER'S DIRECTIONS.

"Fear not the lions, for they are chained, and are placed there for trial of faith where it is ; and for discovery of those that have none ; keep in the midst of the path, and no hurt shall come unto thee."—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

FOR many days after her brother's visit Margery felt sad and depressed. Clifford's bitter words had destroyed her brightest hopes. She did not dare now to think much about the future ; but whenever she did, her anticipations were all shadowed with a great dread. That Clifford would keep his promise, and that he and all her friends were fully determined to give her no peace until she yielded to their wishes, was a sorrowful fact to which Margery could no longer be blind.

Naturally very sensitive, unkind criticism and ridicule pained her like blows. She sobbed herself to sleep many nights while recalling Laura's and Clifford's unjust reproaches, and when she thought of being once more exposed daily to such cruel taunts and sneers, her courage failed and her trial seemed greater than she could bear. Of all



this trouble and sorrow, however, Margery said nothing—except in her prayers.

All that her kind friends at Wind-love knew, was that from the day of her brother's visit she was quieter, and though her smile was sweet as ever, it was far from being as bright, and her face, when she was alone, was sure soon to grow not only serious, but sad, as if the thoughts over which she brooded were closely allied to tears.

What did it mean? Miss Kathie puzzled over that question, and so did others; but Margery did not seem inclined to answer it; and so the beautiful season went by, until the shortening days and cool nights of September told that the summer already was but a memory of the past, and that it was only the shadow of its glory that still lingered on the fields and in the woods.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton would soon be at home now. Already they had sent directions to Mrs. True about opening their house and preparing for their return; and Margery, while she longed for their arrival, felt, at the same time, that it would only be the signal for fresh contests between herself and them.

Life looked very dark to Margery in those days, and many, many times the old questions that most Christians have at some sad crises had cause to ask occurred to her. Why was it such a hard thing to do right, such an easy thing to do wrong?



Why did all the world's smiles, and gifts, and favors seem to lure one downward? Why did none, or at best, very few, beckon upward? Why was it that, if she would really follow Christ and honor him, she must leave undone much that the world approved, and dare to do much that it would censure and disapprove? Oh, why, why, when Christ died for the world, should it be made such a hard struggle for one of his little ones to live in it and be a Christian?

Margery was brooding over those questions one day, while resting on the old door-step, when, opening her little Testament, her eyes fell on these words: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also."

Tribulation,—the threshing that separates the wheat from the chaff,—was that a thing to glory in? It might be submitted to, as we submit to many things that we know are inevitable or necessary; but to exult, to glory in it, oh, what glorious, wonderful secret did St. Paul possess, that he, in deepest, holiest truth, could say: "We glory in tribulation?"

Still absorbed in that question, she did not notice the approach of a carriage nor look up until a handful of golden-rod dropped down on her book and Mr. MacMillan's voice said,—

"There are lessons to be learned from flowers as well as books, Miss Margery, and in devotion to the one you must not neglect the other."



"Thank you," Margery said, gratefully, as she gathered up the graceful, golden plumes, and looked at him with a smile that, if not quite as bright as he would have liked to see, was yet very sweet. "Thank you, Mr. MacMillan, I do not neglect the flowers but I am afraid I cannot find the lessons in them I am anxious to learn now."

"What are those very important lessons? What grave problems are you trying to solve now?" Mr. MacMillan asked, playfully. But then, as he came nearer and saw her book, his expression changed.

"No," he said, in a different voice, "the flowers, and all other beautiful things in nature, have their place in our education, but their place is never before that book. And yet," he added, as he watched Margery's face, and noticed how pale and sad it looked, "there are times when rest and play are better for us than any study, Miss Margery: there are surer remedies than books for an aching head."

"How do you know my head is aching?" Margery asked, as she slowly closed her book.

"It does not require much skill to detect it, when the signs are as plain as I am sorry to see they are now," he answered, kindly. "Come, Miss Margery, put away your book, and come with me, and hear what the hills have to say to you."

"The hills?" Margery repeated, in surprise.



"Yes. I am going to South Haven. You have never been there, I think. It is just the other side of that low chain of hills we can see from Goodtown, and will be only a pleasant drive for us this afternoon. Will you go?"

"If you can wait for me to get ready," Margery answered, as she glanced down at her light dress that was almost too thin for a September drive.

"Take your own time, and be sure to take a warm wrap," Mr. MacMillan said, pleasantly.

Mr. MacMillan had only waited a few minutes when Margery returned.

"Are we going to Wind-love first?" she asked, as Mr. MacMillan took his seat beside her in the light wagon and started his horse.

"No. I was charged to bring you back there for tea, but our destination now is the hills."

"One would almost as soon expect to see a giant on a dwarf's back as to see hills rising in this low, level country," Margery said, as she glanced around her, and saw only a long stretch of heavy, sandy road, that ran through a plain, thickly timbered with a mixed growth of pines and oaks.

"You will see them soon, however," Mr. MacMillan answered, "and like them none the less, I think, for coming upon them out of this low, monotonous country. I remember the first time I saw them; I could only think of the pleasant,



unexpected surprises God loves to prepare for his children. The change from these dark, lonely woods to those sunny, breezy hills was as complete as the change that comes sometimes in our lives, when, from looking mournfully at ourselves and seeing only our own imperfections, we look suddenly up to heaven and catch a glimpse of the white robe that covers all our stains."

Margery made no answer, for they were on the hills now and words seemed of little consequence.

"The air is doing you good," Mr. MacMillan said, in a satisfied voice, after watching her a few minutes. "I felt sure these old hills would have a message for you to-day, Miss Margery."

There was something very sweet and yet a little sad in Margery's smile as she looked at him.

"I believe they are saying something to me," she said; "but I would like my message delivered in words. Translate it for me, please."

"Will this express it?—'*As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.*'"

"Is he—really?" Margery questioned, in a low voice.

"Do you doubt it?"

She hesitated a little before replying. "No," she said then; "I believe it is so, Mr. MacMillan, but—sometimes—it is hard to feel it."



"Suppose you tell me what those 'sometimes' are," Mr. MacMillan gently suggested.

Margery sighed unconsciously. "Why, the times when we are in trouble, and feel lonely and helpless," she said, sadly; "the times when the future looks dark, and it almost seems as if we were left to fight our battles alone, and we feel that it is well-nigh impossible for us to stand firm, and live as—if we are Christians—we ought to live."

Margery was unwittingly giving Mr. MacMillan an explanation of the sadness that for so many days he had regretfully noticed in her. He was silent for a moment, but then he said, in a tone at once kind and encouraging,—

"The promise is sure, Miss Margery,—'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee.'"

"Always?"

"Yes, always. God's promises mean all that they say, and more."

"But he doesn't always do it," Margery said, in a hopeless voice.

"Be careful, Miss Margery. When we doubt a promise we rarely claim it, and how, then, can it be fulfilled for us? But show me—if you can—one instance where God was ever called upon in trouble by an obedient, trusting child, and failed to keep his word."



"I cannot," Margery said, humbly. "But, still—it does not look so, Mr. MacMillan. The world is full of troubled people, and—God does not deliver them."

"Hush!" Mr. MacMillan said, quickly, as if it pained him to hear such words from her lips; "never say that. Do you think St. Paul, though after all his prayers 'the thorn in the flesh' was still left 'to buffet' him, ever felt, for one moment, that God had not delivered him?"

"No," Margery said, softly; but, in a moment, she added, "I do not want to say anything wrong, Mr. MacMillan, but I cannot help thinking there are those in the world to-day who have 'thorns in the flesh,' but God does not seem to comfort them as he did St. Paul."

"Do you think they trust him as St. Paul did? Perhaps they fail to do their part, Miss Margery; just"—and if the words were full of reproof, they were likewise full of kindness—"just as you are failing to do yours now."

"I cannot help failing," Margery said, wearily.

"Are you sure? Are you not a little morbid now, and, in consequence, disposed to exaggerate your short-comings? I think you are; though I am sorry to say you are certainly failing in one important duty at this moment, and that is in enjoying—as I wish you to—this pleasant ride and day."



"I am enjoying them," Margery declared ; but it was with a smile that looked as if it lived next-door to a tear.

"Then what is your trouble? Pardon me, Miss Margery, if I question you too closely ; but I have seen for some time that you are unhappy, and if a friend can help you, will you not let me be that friend?"

"I don't know as any one can help me," Margery said, sadly. "We have to live our lives and fight our battles alone, don't we?"

"I don't think I have to," he said, cheerfully. "Since the promise, 'Lo! I am with you always,' was spoken, I do not think any Christian is doomed to a lonely life, or to a hopeless, solitary struggle with either seen or unseen foes."

Margery's only answer was a sigh, and once more Mr. MacMillan asked,—

"Against what are you fighting now, Miss Margery?"

She turned to him now and showed him a very sorrowful face. "It is not so much what I am doing now as what I have yet to do," she said, sadly. "I feel so helpless about the future. I cannot see anything but trouble in store for me, and—I—haven't—courage to endure it." And with this sad confession Margery broke down completely.

"Poor child !" The compassionate words came



involuntarily to Mr. MacMillan's lips, but the next instant he said kindly, but very firmly,—

“Miss Margery, if you give me a friend's privilege, I do not know but the first use I make of it will be to scold you. Who has ordered you to anticipate the future? Who requires you to have courage to-day to endure the trials and sorrows you may never meet?”

“But I know I must meet them,” Margery insisted.

“Naughty child; do you really mean to make me scold you?” he said. But then, more gravely, he asked: “Are they new trials, or only repetitions of old ones?”

“Both,” Margery sobbed. “When father comes, I know, from his last letter, he expects me to do as he wishes; and when Laura and Clifford were here they told me they would have no pity for me if I persisted in my present course. And, oh, it does hurt me so to be so ridiculed and criticised; it seems as if I could not bear it.”

If Mr. MacMillan's gentle horse had been in the habit of reflecting over men and events, he would have wondered what caused his usually kind master to touch him so sharply with the whip at that moment, or check him in such a stern voice the next. But whatever occasioned Mr. MacMillan's anger, it was quickly controlled.

“Miss Margery,” he said, gently, “our best



earthly friends make sad mistakes sometimes in their treatment of us." But can you not trust your heavenly Father? Can you not believe that he will make no mistake, and suffer no trial to touch you that he knows will not leave a blessing behind it?"

"I do try to feel so," Margery said, humbly; "but I am so weak, and how will I ever live as I ought if Clifford ridicules me every day?"

"Do you remember the lions before the house Beautiful?" Mr. MacMillan asked, in answer to Margery's sad question.

"Yes," she said.

"They were to Christian much like what criticism and ridicule are to you, Miss Margery. But when you shrink from the lions, you must remember the porter's directions, and if you obey them, you are safe. The lions are chained. There is One who is stronger than they. 'Keep in the midst of the way, and no harm can come unto you.'"

"The midst of the way," Margery repeated, thoughtfully. "Don't you think it hard to keep just there, Mr. MacMillan?"

"Not when we keep our eyes on our guide, and obediently follow as he leads us."

Margery considered that answer for a few moments. "Mr. MacMillan," she asked soon, "do you think it an easy thing to glory in tribulation?"



"No," he answered, gravely; "it is not an easy thing."

"St. Paul did it," Margery said; "and, Mr. MacMillan, I have been wondering this afternoon how he could. It seems as if he knew some wonderful secret that made him so triumphant. And I wish"—and Margery's voice was truly wishful—"I wish I knew it, too."

"Shall I tell it to you?" Mr. MacMillan said, in a voice that Margery half-fancied was touched with a little of that same triumphant joy. "One little word will tell it all, Miss Margery, and that word is—consecration."

"And it means—what?" Margery asked, in a half-frightened whisper.

"Unquestioning obedience, unconditional self-surrender."

"It means—hard things," Margery said, in the same awed tone in which she had spoken before.

"No. Not hard for one who has once tasted that the Lord is good; not hard for one who knows and believes the love that God hath toward him."

"But how—how can we do it?"

"It is a simple thing to do. Will you do it, Miss Margery? We give our wills to God, and he accepts them. He reveals his will to us, and we obey it."

And then," Margery said, in a voice that was



thrilled with tender, but glad feeling, "and then can we, too, glory in tribulation, Mr. MacMillan?"

"If God sends it. The consecrated heart prays always 'Thy will be done,' for it knows that the spring of God's will is love. And so, when tribulations come, it can glory even in them, for, though they may seem grievous now, it knows they come to bless. I sometimes think," Mr. MacMillan thoughtfully continued, "that tribulations are like the angels, of whom we so often read in the Bible. Their mission to God's people was almost always one of blessing, and still they were always received with trembling. Their greeting was always 'fear not;' but not until they were gone did those to whom they came fully realize the glory and honor God had bestowed upon them. God's angels come to us often now in the shape of trials, denials and—it may be—tribulations. We shrink from them in terror, while all the time—if we would listen—our Father's voice is whispering 'fear them not,' and our Father's love is making them the bearers of his richest gifts."

Margery's heart was full; she had no answer for Mr. MacMillan's earnest words, and, in a silence that was even pleasanter than speech, they rode the remainder of the way to South Haven.

The homeward ride over the breezy hills, just flooded with the sunset light, and through the silent woods that glowed and burned with the



colors of the western sky, was soon accomplished, and they returned to Wind-love just as the bell was ringing for an early tea.

"Here is a letter for you, Archibald," Professor Carter said, as, just after tea, the evening mail was brought in, and they all awaited its distribution; "it is marked 'in haste,' but I hope it is nothing serious."

"It is probably from my uncle," Mr. MacMillan said, as he received and quietly opened it.

Whoever it was from, it was soon read, and whatever its contents, none could judge of them from Mr. MacMillan's quiet face. But, soon after reading it, he arose and left the room, and for a long while after they heard his firm, steady step, as he paced back and forth along the length of the piazza.

He came in presently, however, with his usual pleasant smile. "Miss Margery," he said, "you stipulated for an early return home; do you still wish to go, or will you spend the night here?"

"Here, of course!" Miss Kathie and Mrs. Carter exclaimed, in one breath. But Margery was firm in her decision to return home; and, while the others were urging her to remain and laughing at her positive refusal, Mr. McMillan stood by without speaking and without, apparently, any wish in the matter.

"Read this letter, mother, dear, while I am



gone," he said to Mrs. McMillan, as, when Margery was ready, he handed her the letter he had so recently received, "and we will talk about it on my return. Now, Miss Margery, I am at your service."

"Are you sure your wrap is warm enough?—this September night is rather cool," he asked, with thoughtful kindness, as they left the house. But on Margery's assuring him that it was, he made no further remark, and they walked for some distance in the beautiful moonlight evening in silence.

"Miss Margery," Mr. MacMillan said, suddenly, "I am a dull companion to-night, I fear. Say something to brighten me, give me the thought that is in your mind now."

"That thought is not an original one," Margery answered; "but it is better than any of my own could be. I was just thinking of Bunyan's Mr. Fearing. You know him," she added, quaintly.

"Mr. Fearing? Yes, I know him better to-night, I think, than I ever did before. But what about him, Miss Margery? Tell me what you were thinking, if you please."

"It is not much," Margery said, modestly; "but something reminded me of that story,—I think it one of the most beautiful in 'Pilgrim's Progress,' don't you,—and then I remembered Great-heart's words: 'My Master, you must know, is very ten-



der, especially to them that are afraid.' And that thought made me think of how often we are afraid—afraid to do and bear God's will—when, after all, that will must be just the very sweetest and best thing for us, must it not?" And, as if for confirmation of her faith, Margery looked questioningly at Mr. MacMillan.

His answer did not come at once, but soon he said: "Thank you, Miss Margery, you have given me just the word I needed. You have reminded me that when the Master is so tender the servant may well trust to his guidance, and believe"—and Mr. MacMillan's voice dropped as if he were speaking for himself—"that, though his Lord may lead him by roundabout ways, he will not lead him wrong."

Something in that speech touched and puzzled Margery, but she did not attempt to reply to it; and only the cry of the katydid broke the silence of the sweet, still night, until Mr. MacMillan spoke again.

"Miss Margery," he said, "your parents will be at home soon, and you will return to them at once; will you not?"

"Yes," Margery rather soberly answered.

He looked down at her with a kind and thoughtful interest that well understood her fears and truly sympathized with them.

"They love you very dearly," he said, gently,



“and in their joy at having you with them again, I cannot think that they will continue to oppose you. But do your part faithfully, Miss Margery, and then, some day, when we meet again, I know you will be able to tell me that God has more than done his.”

“When we meet again!” Margery repeated, in great surprise; “why, won’t that be to-morrow, Mr. McMillan?”

“No; I fear not,” he slowly answered. “Many long to-morrows may pass before we meet again, Miss Margery. But,” he continued, more cheerfully, as he felt that he was saddening her, “long as they may seem, they will not last forever. I shall not forget you, and surely, some day,—if you remember me,—I shall look forward to seeing you again.”

“And now,” he said, in a minute, as Margery remained silent, “let me tell you just what I expect to do. You have heard us speak of my uncle—my mother’s only brother. He is an old man, and very feeble both in mind and body. Indeed, he is in such a state that he cannot brook the least opposition, and we, who love him, try always, when possible, to accede to his wishes. He is a lonely old man, for his wife and only child he buried years ago. Through all my fatherless boyhood he watched over me as no other, except a father, could, and I have always been to him more



like a son than a nephew. We have traveled together a great deal. When I met you, a year ago, we had but just returned from a long tour through Europe, and I hoped then to be able to remain at home, and expected this autumn to take charge of a little church that is very dear to me. In the spring, however, my uncle began to grow restless; all through this summer he has been talking of traveling again, and now, in the letter I received to-night, he writes that he has made all his arrangements, even to securing our state-rooms, and wishes to start immediately. This winter he proposes to spend in Egypt, and, in order to satisfy him, I must leave Pine Clumps to-morrow morning. There are many reasons"—and Mr. Mac-Millan's usually calm voice trembled now with some deep feeling—"why I regret my uncle's decision. I do not like to leave my mother. It is a trial to give up my church, and—it is always a trial to say good-by when we know not what the greeting on our return may be. But I cannot oppose nor refuse my uncle. In his helpless, forlorn old age I must repay the great kindness bestowed upon my youth, and be to him now the son he needs. Do you not think so?" And Mr. Mac-Millan waited for Margery's answer.

She raised her head, and in the moonlight he saw her face; it had never looked fairer or sweeter than it did then.



"I know you will do what is right," she said, simply. But there was a ring in her voice that told of a trust and confidence that might have nerved one far less resolute than her hearer to deserve her faith.

They had reached the farm-house now, and stood together for the last time on the old door-step. Mr. MacMillan gave one quick look up at the sky above them, then let his eyes roam to the beautiful bay before him and wander far across it to the ocean, whose white waves he could see gleaming brightly in the moonlight. Silently he watched it all, for a moment, and then once more let his eyes come back to Margery.

"God helping me, I will do right," he said, solemnly. "Good-by, Miss Margery; I leave you—where I know you will be safe—in the hands that will keep sacred all I commit to them."

Without another word he turned away; and as Margery stood alone on the door-step she heard his firm, decided step as he walked rapidly from the house.



## CHAPTER XII.

### IN THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION.

“Now they began to go down the hill into the valley of Humiliation. . . . This is a valley that nobody walks in but those that love a pilgrim’s life.”—*Pilgrim’s Progress, Part II.*

THE remaining days of Margery’s stay at Pine Clumps were checkered days, full at once of sunshine and shadows, of beautiful memories and hopes that were sadly blended with fears. She was almost constantly at Wind-love now. “You belong to me until your own mother comes,” Mrs. MacMillan said, tenderly, and Margery felt that it was very sweet to be so claimed, and looked sorrowfully forward to the time when all the ties that bound her to Wind-love and the dear friends there would be broken, as she knew they would be when her parents returned.

It sometimes seemed to Margery a very sad and strange thing that the friends to whom she belonged by the bonds of blood and name should be so unlike the friends to whom she seemed, in soul, really to belong.



She loved her parents—loved them dearly. It was her very love for them that made her feel their displeasure so intensely. But these new friends—these heart-relations, as she sometimes affectionately called them—who understood her, and loved the things that she loved, and helped her to love them better, Margery felt that ties even more subtle and powerful than those of blood and name bound her to them, and often her mournful cry was, How can I give them up?

Mrs. MacMillan and Mrs. Carter spoke of the long visits she was to make them during the winter, and Margery listened to their plans, and promised to fulfill them if she could, and yet all the time felt sure that when she left Pine Clumps she would, if her parents and brother could accomplish it, have no more intercourse with these friends.

The time to leave them came soon. One beautiful, early October day she came home from a walk with Miss Kathie, to find a letter waiting for her from Clifford.

The steamer their parents were returning on was due in New York the next day. She must take the early morning train in order to be there in time to meet them on their arrival.

When farewells have to be said, it is one of our heavenly Father's tender arrangements for us that the time allotted to them is usually short. Mar-



gery had little time that night, in the bustle of packing and all her hurried preparations for departing, to brood over the break that was coming in her life, and the next morning, at the station, the parting words were as few as they were affectionate.

They were all said at last. She was seated in the car; from the window she caught a last, hasty glance of the tender, loving faces. Then the great engine gave its sudden puff, the train started, and Margery went onward to the life and friends awaiting her.

There was nothing wanting in the love with which her parents greeted her, when, on first leaving the steamer, they clasped her in their arms.

"We will let by-gones be by-gones, little daughter," Mr. Hamilton said, as he seated Margery beside himself in the carriage, and drew her close to his side. "We are altogether once more, and now we will all try to make our life and home as happy as possible."

"I will do my part, father," Margery joyfully promised. But in a very few days she was made to feel that in a home as devoted as hers was to the love and service of the world, her part would only be to suffer. Her friends would not consent to her being happy in her own chosen way, and she, even while they were proud of her and rejoiced in her beauty, could hardly be said to add



to their happiness, while her desires and tastes so constantly came in conflict with theirs.

“And so, Margery,” Mr. Hamilton said, an evening or two after they were once more settled in their home, “you did not find Pine Clumps as lonely as you at first expected. Pray, how many were there in Professor Carter’s party?”

“They had a good many visitors, father, but there were only five who remained all the summer: Professor Carter, and his wife, Miss Woodward, and Mr. and Mrs. MacMillan.”

“Mr. and Mrs. MacMillan, hey; were they husband and wife?”

“Oh, no,” and Margery laughed gayly at the question. “Mrs. MacMillan was quite an elderly lady, and Mr. MacMillan was her son.”

“Her son. Humph! Well, Margery, of them all, which did you like the best?”

“They were all exceedingly kind to me, father, and I liked them all very much.”

“Yes, of course,” Mr. Hamilton said, in a peculiar tone. “But there are preferences in friendship as in most other things. Who were your favorites, Margery? I am positive you know, and I have a mind to know, too. Tell me.”

When Mr. Hamilton said “tell me” in that tone, Margery knew he meant to be told, and, rather unwillingly, she answered,—

“I think I liked Mrs. MacMillan and her



son best, father; I seemed to belong more to them."

Mr. Hamilton seized the poker, thrust it savagely through the bars of the grate, and stirred up the soft coal smouldering there until it broke into a brilliant blaze. He watched it grimly for a few moments, but then he said,—and whatever his thoughts might have been his voice was pleasant,—

"I do not choose that you should even seem to belong to those people, Margery; so you may put all such fancies out of your pretty head at once. You are my little daughter, and I have no mind to share my property in you with any one. Do you understand, hey?"

"Yes, father, but I do not think love to my friends could ever conflict with my love to you."

"I do not mean that it ever shall," Mr. Hamilton said, decidedly. And Margery sighed and took her first lesson in the humility that can bear to be thwarted and denied, and yet feel no resentment.

The next day was Sunday.

"Where are you going, Margery?" Mr. Hamilton asked, as he met her on the stairs soon after breakfast, and noticed that she was dressed to go out.

"Only to Sunday-school."

"Ridiculous! What do you want to go there for? What would you do there if you went?"



"I had a class of little girls for a few Sundays last spring," Margery explained, "and I used to hear their Bible lessons, and, sometimes, I used to read to them."

"Read, did you? Well, you needn't go to Sunday-school to do that. I'd like to be read to myself. Suppose you come in here and devote this morning to me." And Mr. Hamilton opened the library door and walked into the room.

Margery stood for a moment on the last step of the stairs with a troubled, doubtful look on her young face. She wanted very much to go to Sunday-school. Should she insist upon having her own way? Did God want her to go, or did he want her, in this, as in every other question where no real principle of right or wrong was involved, to submit to her parents?

There could be but one answer to that question, and, without a murmur, Margery followed her father.

"What shall I read, father?" she asked, pleasantly.

"Let me see." And Mr. Hamilton walked to one of his well-filled book-cases. "Do you know anything of Macaulay, Margery?"

"Not much, except the little I found in my 'English Literature,'" Margery frankly confessed.

"Then I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to him to-day. You will find that he is



worthy of your intimate acquaintance." And Mr. Hamilton took down a book and came back to a seat near Margery. "Here," he said in a moment, "you may read the essay on Milton. It is a grand composition on a grand subject. I shall be disappointed in you if you do not enjoy it." And Mr. Hamilton settled himself comfortably in his easy-chair and Margery began to read. She read without interruption until she had finished Macaulay's impassioned, glowing eulogy on the Puritans.

"Stop!" Mr. Hamilton said then. "Do you agree with Macaulay there, Margery? What do you think of those old fellows?"

Margery looked up with her face and eyes kindling with enthusiasm. "I think they were almost the grandest heroes of whom I ever read, father."

"Almost, hey? Then they don't quite come up to your ideal of a hero. Pray, who does?"

"There are grander ones in the Bible," Margery said, thoughtfully. "St. Paul, for instance, father."

"Stuff!" Mr. Hamilton exclaimed, contemptuously. "Let the heroes of the Bible remain in the Bible, if you please. I want to talk about those old Puritans. They were just a set of enthusiasts, my dear,—a most fanatical, intolerant body of men."

"They did a grand work, father."



“Did they? I am happy to hear it. That was when they persecuted Roger Williams and the Quakers, and hanged the witches, I suppose.”

“Father, they were human and they lived in an intolerant age. But I think”—and there was a clear, sweet ring to Margery’s voice—“I think that the men who could bind themselves by a solemn vow to walk in all God’s ways, made known or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatsoever it should cost them, and who could keep that vow, deserve to be described by other adjectives than fanatical and intolerant.”

Mr. Hamilton smiled. Margery looked very lovely just then, with her cheeks glowing and her eyes lit up with her interest in her subject. He enjoyed looking at her, and he was not annoyed when she differed with him, as long as it was not on any topic that concerned themselves personally. As he watched her, he suddenly asked,—

“How would you have enjoyed living with those same old Puritans, Margery?”

“I’d much rather live now in the nineteenth century,” Margery quietly answered.

“You are evading my question. I said nothing about centuries. I was talking of men. When I ask a direct question, I wish a direct answer. Would you like to live now, in these days, with people like those Puritans, Margery?”



That question was certainly direct enough, but to give it a direct answer was a hard trial for Margery. She felt like a poor little sailing-craft, whom an enemy, in the shape of a threatening man-of-war, has suddenly ordered to show her colors. If only she might keep her colors covered,—but they must be shown. Mr. Hamilton was bent on being answered, and truthfully, though very reluctantly, she said,—

“I am very glad to live now, in days when men know how to be charitable and merciful, as well as just, father. But with just such earnest, sincere Christians as those old Puritans were,—yes, father, I would like to live.”

“Read on,” Mr. Hamilton commanded, in a voice that sounded very much like a growl. And Margery read on until the hour for church arrived.

“Margery,” Mr. Hamilton said, coldly, then, as she closed her book, “hereafter, every Sunday morning, you will spend the time before church with me. Will you remember?”

“Yes, father,” Margery promised, while she silently prayed for grace to be patient and humble.

Mr. Hamilton did not again allude to that morning’s conversation. It was a little thing, but—as he said to himself—it was a straw which showed which way the wind was blowing. And since he did not mean that it should continue



to blow in that direction, he decided in his own mind that it would be wise to keep Margery under close inspection.

"What have you there, Margery?" he asked, a day or two after, as Margery came into the library with several white envelopes in her hand.

"Letters, father. I've come for stamps for them."

"Give them to me." And Mr. Hamilton extended his hand.

"Whom are they to?" And he looked at the directions.

"Ah! Professor Carter, Miss Kathie Woodward, Mrs. A. MacMillan. Margery, have you sent any other letters to these people?"

"Only a card, the day after my return home, father."

"Very well. Be careful that you do not send any more." And Mr. Hamilton walked deliberately to the grate and dropped the dainty, prettily-directed letters into the fire.

"Father, please, please don't!" Margery cried, in great distress.

"Stop!" Mr. Hamilton said, sternly. "Not another word, and not another letter, either! Do you hear me, Margery?"

"Father," Margery managed to say, though her tears were almost choking her, "please let me write one more, just to explain; they will think



me so ungrateful if they do not hear from me at all."

"That is precisely what I wish them to think. It will, I hope, put a stop to their trying to see or hear from you again."

"But, father, I cannot bear it," Margery said, passionately. "I want to hear from them—I want to see them—they are my friends, and I love them dearly."

"There are others on whom you may bestow your affection," Mr. Hamilton said, severely. "As for these people, Margery, you have seen the last of them—with my consent—and written your last letter to them."

"But why?" Margery pleaded. "They are good people, father."

"Too good," Mr. Hamilton said, angrily; "they effectually counteracted all that I hoped Pine Clumps would do for you. Margery, promise me,—I know I can rely upon your promise—that you will not write to these people again."

"Only one little letter," Margery ventured to beg.

"I tell you no, not one. Will you promise me, Margery?"

Margery stood in the centre of the room, the picture of despair. All her warm affections for her friends seemed to plead with her to cling to them, and all the pride of her nature rebelled at



being so unjustly treated. Should she, could she submit to it?

"Your parents are to be obeyed always, in every matter that does not touch your duty to God," Mr. MacMillan had once said to her, and in that moment of bitter trouble Margery remembered his words. Would he have spoken them if he had foreseen what trying demands would be made upon her, and how entirely her obedience would separate her from himself and his friends?

Yes, she knew he would; even then, as she struggled with the fierce pride and anger that threatened to overpower her, she could almost hear him saying, "Do your duty; God will take care of the consequences."

Down, far down into the valley of humiliation Margery went at that moment; bravely she mastered her pride, and though the doing of her duty seemed a trial greater than she could bear, meekly she resolved that she would do it.

Mr. Hamilton watched her struggle for a few moments; then he said, sternly,—

"I have a right to demand your obedience. Margery, will you give it to me?"

Once—twice—Margery opened her lips and tried to speak, but the words refused to come. At last, by a strong effort, she forced herself to say,—

"Yes."

It was but one little word; but as she uttered it,



it seemed to Margery that she was renouncing every hope that made her life beautiful.

Was it really her duty to make that promise? Alone in her room that sorrowful day, Margery asked herself again and again that question. Her Bible gave her but one answer. There was no evading its clear, emphatic teachings that obedience to parents was a solemn duty, always, where it did not clash with the still more solemn duty of obedience to God. Yes, she had done right, but only her heavenly Father knew at what painful cost.

She hoped at first that her friends would write to her, though they did not hear from her. But, as the weeks went by, that hope had to be sorrowfully, but utterly abandoned. She did not know that, by her father's orders, all her letters were handed first either to her mother or himself; and she never knew of two or three that were tossed relentlessly into the fire. Nor did she know, until long after, of the lovely Indian summer day when her friends, on their way home from Pine Clumps, rode out to see her, and were coldly informed, by her mother's orders, "that Miss Hamilton did not wish to see them." She was not suffered to want for society of a certain kind. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were very gay—even for them—that winter. Their house was constantly thronged with visitors, and it sometimes seemed to Margery



that, in the sphere in which she was placed, to entertain and to be entertained formed the chief end of life.

It was a trying winter; it wore upon her, and yet, in the truest sense, it did her no harm.

Margery went far, very far, into the valley of humiliation in those days. She learned to curb her naturally proud spirit, to repress the quick and hasty word that often trembled on her lips and give a gentle one instead, and she gained, too, much of the beautiful spirit that helped her to obey the grand old precept, and be "not easily provoked,"—not easily slighted. Like Mercy, in "Pilgrim's Progress," Margery found that low, green valley of Humiliation a fruitful soil for the lilies of patience, meekness and faith, and passing through it, she learned to sing the "Shepherd Boy's Song" of sweet content,—

"He that is down need fear no fall;  
He that is low, no pride;  
He that is humble ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.

"I am content with what I have,  
Little be it or much;  
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,  
Because thou savest such.

"Fullness to such a burden is,  
That go on pilgrimage;  
Here little, and hereafter bliss,  
Is best from age to age."



"Margery," Clifford said to her suddenly one day, "what do you want most in this world?"

"I want to do right, Clifford," she quietly answered.

"Bosh!" Clifford said, angrily, as he went off and banged the door after him. "I wish that word 'right' was blotted out of the dictionary."

Margery had spoken only the truth. In that still valley of humiliation she was learning that the doing of God's will brought always its own comfort with it, and that no one ever, for Christ's sake, endured wrong meekly and subdued pride, and sought in true humility to bear crosses without murmuring, who did not come, even in this life, into glad possession of the Saviour's parting gift of peace that passeth all understanding.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### HEALING LEAVES.

"Then there came to him a hand with some of the leaves of the tree of life; the which Christian took and applied to the wounds that he had received in the battle, and was healed immediately."—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

"**H**AVE you noticed how pale and thin Margery is growing?" Mrs. Hamilton asked her husband, a little anxiously, one morning, in the May following their return from Europe.

"No. Is she? Really, I have been so engaged with business lately I haven't thought much about it. There is nothing serious the matter, is there?"

"I don't know; probably not. But she is not well. I am sure of that. Suppose, on your way down town, you call on Dr. King and ask him to come in and see her."

"Agreed. I'll do it," Mr. Hamilton answered. And, in consequence of that agreement, that afternoon saw Dr. King sitting in Mrs. Hamilton's dressing-room and closely inspecting Margery.

"What is the matter with you, Miss Margery?"



he asked, after he had felt her pulse and gone through with the usual preliminary exercises of a physician when making a professional call.

"Nothing, I think doctor," Margery answered.

"Nothing—hum! Well, Miss Margery, 'nothing' is very much like one of the unknown quantities in algebra: you can never safely foretell what it will amount to. I have, myself, known pretty serious consequences to result from letting 'nothing' alone. What are you fretting about, hey?" And he suddenly turned his keen spectacled eyes upon her, and scanned her as if she were a specimen under the microscope.

"Nothing," Margery said again, and truthfully.

"You are sure? Well, what have you given up that you would like much to have, hey? And what are you doing that you do not like to do? Will you answer 'nothing' to both these questions?" And the old doctor peered at her at once inquisitively and kindly.

The color deepened a little in Margery's pale cheeks; but she answered, truthfully, "I have everything I ought to have, doctor, I believe, and I do not think I am doing anything just now that I ought not to do."

"Glad to hear it," Dr. King said, with a wise nod of the head. "It is not every one in this dissatisfied world that could say as much. Only"—and the doctor paused in the very act of uncork-



ing a tiny phial and looked meditatively at Margery—"it's a curious fact, perhaps, but nevertheless I believe it is a pretty true one, that ought and wish are by no means synonymous words in the dictionary, and it is pretty hard, sometimes, to make them synonymous in life." And with another wise little nod the doctor went on preparing his medicine.

"There, Miss Margery," he said, as he finished stirring the liquid, and set the glass containing it back on the table, "there, you are to take a teaspoonful of that every hour or two for to-day and to-morrow, and at the end of that time I think you will feel strong enough to pack your trunk and start for Saratoga, won't you?"

"Why, doctor!" was all Margery in her surprise could say.

"Pre-cise-ly. I am glad you did not say 'no, Doctor.' I am not in the habit of allowing my patients to dispute my orders. You need a change, and you could not have a pleasanter or more complete one than you will find in Saratoga for the next three or four weeks. So you need not object, young lady. My order is Saratoga, and you are to obey it; I'll speak to your father about it. Good afternoon!" And the shrewd and humorous, but skillful and wise, old doctor hurried off.

When Dr. King's order for Margery was made known to her parents there was not a



moment's hesitation about obeying it. If she needed a change, she should have it; and if Saratoga was the place for her, why, to Saratoga she should go.

It was, however, true that Mrs. Hamilton both secretly and openly regretted the necessity of going before the gay season opened. Saratoga in mid-summer, when fashion and folly held high carnival there, she considered delightful; but Saratoga in May and June—Mrs. Hamilton was very doubtful of its being very delightful then.

“But, of course,” as she wisely said, “health must be considered before pleasure.” And so trunks were speedily packed, and one fair, lovely evening in the last of May, Margery sat on the deck of one of the Hudson river steamboats, and in the beautiful purple twilight went gliding up the river on her way to Saratoga.

Margery had at first felt inclined to regret the doctor's selection of a place for her, but in a few days she owned that he was right. The pure, health-giving air and waters strengthened and invigorated her wonderfully, and she found Saratoga in June a most beautiful place: as pure, and clean, and sweet, and quiet as nature, and man—when he tried to do his best—could make it. None of the large, mammoth hotels were open; only a few quiet, home-like boarding-houses in which quiet, sensible people were happily resting.



It was just at the time when a large assembly of ministers from all over the country was convened there, and a large woman's home and foreign missionary society was also holding its meetings there.

Margery enjoyed these meetings. They were to the girl a wonderful revelation of the possibilities and power for good that God had entrusted to the Christian women of her land. And if she had ever been in danger of thinking that herself and her own salvation were all for which she was responsible, she was taught there the solemn but precious truth that she had a work to do for others as well as for herself; and through all her after-life she never forgot it.

She was standing one morning by the beautiful spring in Congress Park, waiting for her mother to finish her morning draught, when a gentleman, who was hurrying past, suddenly stopped.

"I beg pardon, but is not this Miss Hamilton?" he asked, as he smilingly extended his hand.

Margery's sober eyes brightened joyfully as she looked at him. "Mr. Woodward," she exclaimed, "this is a pleasure I little expected." And then, with an impatience that could hardly wait for his answer, she asked,—

"Is Miss Kathie with you?"

"Kathie? Oh, no, she is still with uncle Carter; I expect to meet them to-morrow in New



York. I supposed you knew all about their plans," and Mr. Woodward looked in some surprise at Margery.

"No. I have not heard from any of them in a long time," she answered, sadly. "Do you know how they all are, Mr. Woodward,—all who were at Wind-love last summer?"

"All very well," he said, cheerfully. "Haven't you seen Mrs. MacMillan? She has been in Saratoga all through these meetings, but she left this morning. Professor Carter and his wife and Kathie are to sail with me on Saturday for Glasgow. Archibald has promised to meet us there, and I think Mrs. MacMillan will join us a little later. So, Miss Hamilton, you must think of us this summer as roaming over old Scotia's hills, visiting the English lakes, and doing all the other things that are usually expected of travelers." And Mr. Woodward laughed, as if his own expectations were all pleasant.

Margery scarcely heard him, for she was struggling with a great disappointment. It hurt her like a blow to hear that Mrs. MacMillan had been so near her in Saratoga, and that now she was gone beyond her reach. She could not speak at once, and in a moment Mr. Woodward said,—

"Have you been ill, Miss Hamilton? I am sorry to see that you are not looking very strong."

"I am better," she answered, indifferently. "Mr.



Woodward," she continued, in a very different tone, "when you see my friends, will you please give them my warmest love?"

"I will, with pleasure," he answered, kindly. "I am very glad to have met you, Miss Hamilton, and I am sorry to leave you so soon, but I am to take the next train to the city, and am therefore quite hurried. Good-by." And, with another cordial clasp of her hand, Mr. Woodward bowed and left her, just as her mother set down her last glass and turned towards her.

"Who was that, Margery?" she asked, in a dissatisfied voice.

"Mr. Woodward, mother; Miss Kathie Woodward's brother."

"What! are those people here, in Saratoga?" Mrs. Hamilton asked, in a tone that implied if they were there, a great wrong and injustice had been done her.

Margery sighed as she answered: "Mrs. MacMillan has been, mother, but she left this morning; and Mr. Woodward leaves to-day."

"I am glad to hear it," Mrs. Hamilton said, with an expression of great content. "I consider that we have had a very fortunate escape in not meeting them."

Margery did not reply, and Mrs. Hamilton little suspected with what a sad heart her young daughter walked with her through the pleasant streets



that sunny morning. The pleasure of hearing from her friends was, for a time, almost forgotten in the keen sorrow with which Margery realized her separation from them. "They do not miss nor want me," she mournfully thought. But on that truth—often such a bitter one for our poor hearts to accept—Margery would not allow herself long to dwell. Some sad tears fell when she was once more alone in her own room, but soon she brushed them resolutely away. "I am glad they are happy," she said to herself, "and as for me—well, I am God's child, and

'In the way that he shall choose  
He shall lead me.'"

"Come, Margery," Mrs. Hamilton said, a little later that morning, "this is such a lovely day I propose that we go up Mount MacGregor."

It was a fair, still, exquisite June noon when, as the result of Mrs. Hamilton's proposal, Margery found herself standing on the cool piazza of the MacGregor house. In the clear atmosphere, far away in the green lowlands, she could see quiet villages and peaceful homes; around her, on the hill-top, was only the hush and repose with which nature everywhere loves to crown her heights.

Mrs. Hamilton, wearied from her ride, soon found her way into one of the quiet rooms, and dropped down on a sofa to rest; and Margery, left



to herself, strolled idly about the mountain in search of ferns and mosses. Tiring, in a little while, of even that pleasant quest, she went back to the house, and sitting down on the piazza, looked with thoughtful, questioning eyes at the three or four tiny wild-flowers she had gathered during her walk. Down in the woods and fields and meadows below them, what a profusion of growing, blooming things there were! up there, on that bleak mountain-top, those few lonely wild-flowers looked like timid children that had lost their way; and, as she studied them, the thought in her mind shaped itself slowly into words.

"I do not understand," she said, unconscious that she was speaking aloud, "I do not understand why so much should be crowded into some lives, and so much withheld from others."

"And I do not understand," said a gentle voice beside her, just then, "what you are doing here to-day, Margery Hamilton; but, my dear child, I am very glad to see you."

Margery gave one glad look up at the speaker, and the next moment was laughing and crying in Mrs. MacMillan's arms.

"I thought you had gone away," she said, as soon as she was calm enough to speak; "Mr. Woodward said so."

"I changed my plans quite suddenly," Mrs. MacMillan explained, "and, tempted by the peace



of this mountain-top, I came up here with a friend to spend the day. And now, my dear, tell me about yourself. What are you doing here?"

In a few words Margery answered that question: self was a very uninteresting topic to her at that moment—there was so much she wanted to ask and hear.

"Please tell me all about everybody," she begged, and Mrs. MacMillan smilingly complied.

She did not know when Archibald would return, she said, among items of information; his uncle insisted on remaining abroad, and she was thinking quite seriously of joining them some time during the summer. She expected, she added, to leave the mountain and Saratoga the next day.

"It seems as if I could not let you go," Margery said, affectionately. "Dear Mrs. MacMillan, I have wanted to see you so much, and now I cannot endure the thought that I have only met you for a few moments, and must then be parted from you again."

"It must be better so, dear child," Mrs. MacMillan said, cheerfully, though something in the clasp of her arm told how gladly she would keep the young girl with her if she could. "God knows when it is best to keep his children apart, or best to bring them together."

"He seems to keep us apart more than he brings us together, though," Margery said, in a sad voice.



"Dear Mrs. MacMillan, you do not know how much the 'withheld opportunities' and 'withheld completions of life' puzzle me sometimes. God is so able to give, and yet—yet withholds so much."

There were tears in Mrs. MacMillan's eyes, even while she said, with a smile, "If Archibald were here now, my dear, I fear he would scold us both; for I, too,—when he is away,—often feel as if much was withheld from me. But now shall I tell you what comforts me when such sad thoughts come?"

"Yes, if you please," Margery said, while she drew more closely to Mrs. MacMillan's side.

The hand that rested for a moment on the young girl's hair was very gentle in its touch, and Mrs. MacMillan's voice was very tender as she asked,—

"Do you still read your 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Margery? and do you remember the Interpreter's house and the wonderful things that were there shown Christian?"

"Some of them; not all, I am afraid," Margery answered to the last question.

"Do you remember this? Let me tell you in Bunyan's own words. I love his quaint, old Saxon phraseology more and more. 'I saw moreover in my dream that the Interpreter took him by the hand, and had him into a little room, where sat two little children, each one in his chair. The name of the eldest was Passion, and the name of



the other Patience. Passion seemed to be much discontented, but Patience was very quiet. Then Christian asked: "What is the reason of the discontent of Passion?" The Interpreter answered, "The governor of them would have him stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have all now. But Patience is willing to wait." " "

A moment's silence followed Mrs. MacMillan's last words, and then she asked, gently,—

"Is there not an explanation of all those 'withheld opportunities and completions' that puzzle you so much, dear Margery, in just this one little sentence, 'The governor of them would have him stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year?'" "

"Yes," Margery humbly acknowledged. "If only, dear Mrs. MacMillan, we could always feel sure about 'the next year.'"

Mrs. MacMillan's first answer to those sober words was a gentle kiss. "I am not at all sure that you deserve it, though," she said, smilingly, as she gave it. "Margery, I shall begin to fear that you are a prisoner in one of the many dungeons of castle Doubting if you do not look up and speak more hopefully. Don't you know, my dear child, that to be sure of what Bunyan so quaintly calls 'the next year' is the Christian's happiest privilege?"



Margery's answer to that question was a smile more eloquent than words ; but, in a moment, she said,—

“Mrs. MacMillan, isn't it natural to wish to have our good things now, and to wish, too, to be delivered from all the disagreeable things that are troubling and grieving us ?”

“Very natural, dear Margery,” Mrs. MacMillan said, with a smile ; “so natural, that at this very moment I cannot help wishing for something that would be inexpressibly sweet and precious to me, but that I know—even if I ever have it—I must wait a long time for. The sin is not in wishing for these ‘good things,’ dear, but in repining and fretting because they are denied us, and in doubting God's love because he does not at once indulge and deliver us.”

“Still,” Margery could not help saying, “it does seem strange that he does not at once deliver us when we ask him to do so, and he has all power.”

“Hush !” Mrs. MacMillan said, with a kind imperativeness that reminded Margery strongly of her son. “Do you remember Christian's answer to Apollyon, Margery, in the valley of Humiliation, when he was tortured with just such suggestions as are troubling you now ? Sometimes, when we find ourselves in that valley,—and I am not sure but you are there now,—it is very helpful



for us to remember it. Let me repeat it to you,—  
'His forbearing at present to deliver them is on purpose to try their love, whether they will cleave to him to the end.' "

"I mean to cleave," Margery softly whispered.

"I know you do, and I am sure you will," was the encouraging answer. "And whenever, dear child, you feel weary or weak with your conflicts, go to your Bible, and in its precious promises you will find the healing leaves that strengthened and restored Christian. And now you need not expect me to preach any longer, for I want to know more about yourself."

Another hour passed quickly and happily by, and then the little engine that had brought them up the mountain uttered its warning call.

"Train will start in ten minutes," shouted a man who ran up the steps of the piazza, and Mrs. Hamilton, hearing his words, came hurriedly out.

"Come, Margery," she said, "let us go at once and get good seats."

Margery turned to Mrs. MacMillan; there was a hasty introduction that Mrs. Hamilton coldly acknowledged; then a hurried parting, and in a few minutes Margery was going down the mountain, and again, for long months, there was silence between herself and her friends.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

"Now at the end of this valley was another, called the Valley of the Shadow of Death; and Christian must needs go through it, because the way to the Celestial City lay through the midst of it. Now, this valley is a very solitary place."—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

"I do not know what ails me," Mr. Hamilton said one morning, when, a few weeks after Margery's return from Saratoga, he joined his family at breakfast, "but between my back and head I had no rest last night, and feel perfectly wretched this morning."

"You must have taken cold," Mrs. Hamilton indifferently suggested.

"Looks like it. I hope it is nothing worse," her husband answered, soberly. "No," he said in a few moments, as, after sugaring his coffee, he pushed his cup away, "I cannot drink it. And there is no denying it: I am sick."

"Lie down on the sofa, father, and let me bathe your head," Margery said, affectionately; and, yield-



ing to her gentle persuasions, Mr. Hamilton rested for awhile on the library sofa, and Margery hovered over him, doing first one little thing and then another for his relief. Her efforts, however, seemed to avail little, and as the morning advanced Mr. Hamilton's distress evidently increased.

"Better send for the doctor," Mrs. Hamilton advised. And at last he consented.

"I haven't felt well for several days," he said, languidly, "and I suppose this is nature's revenge for not heeding her warning before. But send for the doctor, and let us know the worst."

Dr. King soon came. And the worst, if one could judge from his serious face after he had examined his patient, threatened to prove no trivial matter. "Miss Margery," he said as, on leaving Mr. Hamilton's room, he met her in the hall, "where is your mother?"

"In the library, I think, Doctor."

"Come there with me, then," Dr. King ordered, in a peremptory voice.

"Now, tell me," he said, as, alone with the mother and daughter, he looked at them with sober and searching eyes, "how much courage have you to meet a great danger and endure a great trial?"

"I haven't any, doctor," Mrs. Hamilton said, nervously.

"And you?" and the doctor turned to Margery.



Margery had grown very pale. The doctor's grave manner warned her—as he intended it should—to prepare for some painful ordeal, and, for a moment, she faltered. But then faith softly whispered the sacred promise, “as thy days, so shall thy strength be,” and her voice, though low, was calm and steady, as she answered,—

“I believe God will give me strength and courage, doctor, to bear all he sends. But,” she added, anxiously, “please do not keep us in suspense. Tell us the truth at once.”

Dr. King waited a moment before answering that appeal. Evidently the truth was not a pleasant or an easy thing for him to tell. But soon he said, quietly,—

“Your father is pretty sick.”

“Yes, I know that,” Mrs. Hamilton impatiently replied. “But it is nothing serious, is it, doctor? You will soon have him well again, won't you?”

“We will hope so,” Dr. King answered. “But now you must be brave and hear the rest. He has a contagious disease.”

“What?” Mrs. Hamilton demanded, in a sharp, quick voice.

“He has all the symptoms of small-pox.”

As if a heavy hand had suddenly struck her, Mrs. Hamilton fell back in her chair, and Margery, with a face from which every particle of color had now fled, stood looking at the doctor.



"Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?" Mrs. Hamilton groaned soon. "I have always had such a perfect horror of that disease, doctor! can't you take care of him? It will be no use for me to try to nurse him; it will kill me if I do, I know it will."

"Mother," Margery said, soothingly, "don't do so. I'll take care of father."

"Then you'll die, or else your good looks will be ruined," Mrs. Hamilton said, with an hysterical cry.

"I am in God's hands," Margery said, gently. "Don't feel anxious about me, mother."

"As if I could help it," Mrs. Hamilton said, in a despairing voice. "Doctor, do you think Margery and I can have contracted the disease yet?"

"No," the doctor said, shortly.

"Then, doctor, wouldn't it be best for us to leave the house at once? You can provide the best professional nurses for him, and, if we were to stay, we could not do him any good, you know, and we would probably both be sick before long. Wouldn't it really be the wisest course for us to go away?"

"Since you feel so, yes," the doctor said, in a short, cold voice. "Where is Clifford?"

"He is at Newport. What a mercy it is he is away from home at this time! I'll send him a



telegram not to return as long as there is any danger."

"As you please," the doctor said, with a frown. "I cannot stay to discuss your plans with you, madam; I must secure the nurses at once; my patient must not die through *my* neglect." And, with a bow that was more expressive of scorn than respect, Dr. King left the room.

A light foot followed him, and a soft voice said, just as he was opening the front-door, "Doctor, will you tell me just what to do for father? I am going to take care of him."

The doctor's stern face softened. "No, no, child," he said, "I don't want you to stay. Go with your mother."

"Mother is nervous and not very strong," Margery said, with a tender wish to shield the mother, of whose selfishness she felt bitterly ashamed. "But I am young, doctor, and my place is with father. I know he will want me, and when he does, I do not want to be missing."

"You will never be missing where your duty calls you," Dr. King thought, admiringly. But he only said,—

"Think well, Miss Margery, before you decide. For, once exposed to this disease, I cannot allow you to go away; you must remain in quarantine here."

"I have decided." The low words were calmly



spoken, and the silent prayer that preceded and followed was known only to God.

The doctor stood for a second irresolute. "Well," he said then, "I don't know where a man is to look for 'ministering angels' in such times as this, if his own family does not prove faithful to him. So come, if you will, Miss Margery, and we will go to your father. I am afraid he has been alone too long already."

Years after, when Margery looked back to that trying day and to the still more trying ones that followed, it seemed to her as if she must be dreaming and as if she never could have lived through such a fearful trial.

But the heart that is stayed on God always finds that God's grace is sufficient for it. And so Margery found it now.

Before the sun set that beautiful summer day Mrs. Hamilton was safely domiciled in a quiet, country home, where telegrams could reach her easily, though she trusted contagion could not. Clifford was telegraphed to and the frightened servants were all dismissed. Only Mrs. True remained.

"The Lord has brought me through many dangers," she said, composedly, when matters were first explained to her, "and, if he pleases, he can bring me through now; and, anyway, Miss Margery dear, I'd rather die a little sooner—if that



could be—through doing my duty, than live a while longer because I neglected it.” And so through all her trial Mrs. True stood faithfully at Margery’s side.

Professional nurses were soon provided by Dr. King, but through all his illness Mr. Hamilton displayed a great repugnance to them. He uttered no complaint when he learned that his wife and son had failed him in his bitter need, but his sad eyes brightened whenever they rested on Margery; and though at first he expressed much solicitude about her, yet soon, in his weak, suffering state, he forgot his fears, and was always restless and troubled when she was not beside him.

Slowly the beautiful summer days drifted by. No one save the doctor came near the house, and with the exception of occasional telegrams from her brother and mother—for Mrs. Hamilton’s dread of contagion made her afraid not only to receive, but even to write letters—Margery was as much cut off from all communication with the outside world as if she had been suddenly transported to one of the dreary, ice-bound islands of the Northern Ocean.

Dr. King watched over her carefully and shielded her with every precaution known to his skill, but Margery thought little of her own danger. Her whole life in those days was centred in her father.

“O God!” she pleaded, in brokenness of heart,



“let him not die. Not die, at least, until he has learned to know and believe the great love that thou hast for him.”

So, through the long days and longer nights she watched and prayed, and still the sick man struggled with disease and hourly passed farther and farther into that dark valley, whose gloomy shadows remain unbroken save when God’s love dispels them.

And Margery herself went down, far down into that fearful valley. Often our keenest, deepest pain is caused by the sorrows and sufferings of others—of those who seem dearer to us than life, but whose lives we are powerless to save.

Often our saddest cries are wrung from us, not by a consciousness of our own great need, but by a despairing conviction of the bitter need of those who are going from us, impenitent and unpardoned, to meet a God whose love they have despised, a Saviour whose offered salvation they have refused.

Those who have passed through such dark sorrows know well what the valley of the shadow of death is. And they can understand why often, in after-years, when Margery was pleading for Christ with those who loved him not, she would say,—

“If you have no pity for yourselves; if you do not for yourselves care to secure eternal life, yet,



for the sake of those you love, do not delay to seek it. Think! You make every other provision for the peace and comfort of your dear ones when you have gone from them. Oh, do not fail to leave them this, the most precious of all legacies—the glad, sure conviction that you have only left them to live forever with Christ.”

Oh, the difference between standing at the grave of a Christian who has only gone home, or at the grave of one who has gone as a stranger into a land where none will welcome him! “There are hearts that have felt that difference, but no words can describe it.”

Would Mr. Hamilton live or die? Margery could not ask that question in words, but her sad, anxious face asked it, for her with touching eagerness, and daily good Dr. King would say, “Hope for the best, my child, hope for the best.”

And Margery hoped and prayed until one evening, as she sat alone and listened to her father’s moans and incoherent murmurs, her faith seemed utterly to fail her, and with a hopeless cry she dropped down upon the floor and let the bitter agony in her soul have vent.

“He must not die,” she moaned. “O God! who art love, thou surely wilt not let him die. Oh, save him,—save him to become a Christian. Oh, if he should die now, how could I bear it? Oh, how could I ever believe in prayer again, if,



after all my prayers, thou shouldst not let him live?"

Through the hush of that starlight night there came no answer to her anguished cries, and minutes passed and still she lay there struggling with her terrible fears.

Once a quick, boyish step went by the house, and a fresh young voice trilled sweetly the refrain of the tender hymn, "Nobody knows but Jesus."

Margery was hardly conscious that she heard, and yet she raised her head to listen.

Did Jesus really know? Was he caring for her in her trial? Would he provide some way that she might be able to bear it? Faith, that had been growing so weak, rallied and looked upward.

"Casting all your care upon him," she whispered, "for he careth for you."

And Margery heeded and obeyed.

"Dear Lord," she murmured soon, "I cannot love him more than thou, since thou couldst die for him. I leave him in thy hands. Thy will be done."

"Thy will be done." As Margery breathed that prayer there came a sudden and sure consciousness that God's will was always love, and that, even now, for her and for her father, it was full of mercy and blessing; and, comforted and strengthened, she arose and stepped cautiously to her father's bed-side.

He was awake, and Margery's heart throbbed



with joy as she saw that he looked at her more intelligently than he had in several days.

“Margery,—little daughter,” he said, feebly, “you know how to pray ; say—Our Father.”

Softly, with trembling lips, Margery obeyed.

“Our Father,” the sick man whispered, brokenly. “Our—Father. I know—by my own heart, Margery—how a father feels. I—will—trust him, and—if I live—I—will—obey him.”

The weak voice faltered and stopped. The tired eyes closed wearily. Was it life or death that was waiting in that quiet room ?

Margery could not tell.

Long she knelt there and watched, until the eastern sky grew pink with the early dawn, and the stir in the street told that men were once more awaking and resuming their daily cares and labors.

“Margery,” her father whispered then, “I feel better, darling. I believe God has heard your prayers. I shall live, and not die, little daughter,—live to praise him for his goodness.”

With a glad burst of grateful tears, Margery heard those humble words. For her, as for Christian in that same dark valley, after the long night, the day had broken, and with Christian she, too, could say,—

“He hath turned—for me—the shadow of death into the morning.”



## CHAPTER XV.

### IN VANITY FAIR.

“Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity ; and at the town there is a fair kept called Vanity Fair. . . . Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town where this lusty fair is kept ; and he that will go to the city, and yet not go through this town, must needs go out of the world.”

—*Pilgrim's Progress.*

FOR many days after the crisis in Mr. Hamilton's illness Margery and her father remained isolated from the rest of the world, and dependent upon each other for sympathy and companionship. And in those quiet, shut-in days the father and daughter drew very close together, for Mr. Hamilton remained true to his solemn promise. His was no mere sick-bed repentance, forgotten as soon as health returned, but the firm and abiding resolve of a humbled, contrite heart. And almost his first act, when he again mingled with the world, was to come forward and acknowledge himself a Christian ; and in his home, his business, and his social relations, his life hence-



forth declared that his profession was sincere. It seemed to Margery now, that the great joy she felt in her father's conversion more than compensated for all she had suffered, and in glad content the time went by until the chill, red-leaf, autumn days arrived, and Mrs. Hamilton and Clifford judged it safe to return home.

Mrs. Hamilton paid very little attention to the change in her husband's life and belief.

It was natural, she supposed, that he should feel a little serious for a while after being so very ill. She did not believe he would continue to feel so long, and any way, she said, she had not time to think or talk much about it; for she had returned home with her mind full of a very important family affair. Clifford and Laura Stanton were engaged; they were to be married shortly before Christmas, and thoughts of dress, and wedding presents, and wedding receptions, left Mrs. Hamilton little time to think of such trivial matters—to her—as souls and their eternal interests.

On one point, however, she did find time to think and speak with decision.

If Mr. Hamilton was weak enough now to be willing to indulge Margery in all her extreme, ridiculous notions, she at least, would remain firm in her opposition.

Margery, she resolved, should go to the city soon for the winter. She should "come out" in



the best society—the best meaning, of course, in Mrs. Hamilton's mind, the wealthiest and most fashionable—and she should be Laura's bridesmaid. And she would, Mrs. Hamilton felt, be a very remarkable girl, if she was not soon fascinated with the pleasures offered her, and did not, in a little while, begin to think and act "like other people"—"a consummation," in Mrs. Hamilton's opinion, "devoutly to be wished," for there was nothing she dreaded more than a charge of singularity.

Margery found it impossible to escape that visit to the city; and, in compliance with her mother's wishes, she packed her trunk, and went, one pleasant November day, to Mrs. Stanton's.

She found Laura intent as ever on having what she called "a good time." Dress, fashion, and display—she lived for these things during the day and dreamed of them at night. She had no leisure for serious thought. Society, like a hard task-master, claimed all her time and talents, and Laura devoted herself to it, and aspired to nothing higher than the position of "leader" in it: and was only one of a great number. Margery saw them all around her, and soon found that the highest ambition of each was to surpass and excel all the others. Often Margery thought of that wonderful scene in the Interpreter's house, where, "you are fairer than I am, said one, and you are more comely than I am, said another," and as



she contrasted that language with what she heard everywhere about her, Margery was at no loss to understand why the speech of the pilgrims sounded strange to the dwellers in Vanity Fair.

And now once more in this gay society the problem every Christian has to solve was presented to Margery. To be in the world and yet not of it; to satisfy, as far as possible, the requirements of her friends and yet to keep herself "unspotted" in the midst of the brilliant and beautiful, yet frivolous and worldly, life by which she was surrounded; this was the problem presented to Margery now. Would it prove an easy one to solve?

Ah! often in the giddy days that preceded Laura's marriage did Margery find herself where, like Bunyan's pilgrims, she felt, "I have need to cry to the Strong for strength;" and realized keenly, too, that, like them, "she would have need to use it when she had it." But her safety was just in this—that she did "cry," and never in vain.

Her friends did not mean to be unkind; "they only," as Laura said, "wanted her to go their way." And as that seemed the one thing she was not willing to do, they did not spare their ridicule and opposition.

"Come, Margery," Laura said, as she entered Margery's room the evening of her first Sunday



at Mrs. Stanton's. "Clifford and Mr. Stevenson are in the parlor, and we want you to join us."

"Excuse me, please, Laura," Margery gently requested.

"Nonsense!" Laura said, impatiently; "this house isn't a nunnery, Margery. You cannot shut yourself away from the world here." And then, more pleasantly, she added, "Clifford really wants you to come down; he will feel hurt if you refuse."

Margery sighed. If she did not go down she knew Clifford would be angry; but if she did go, what then? Well, perhaps nothing. Perhaps he would be satisfied if she just went down for a few minutes, and then she would excuse herself and return to her room, and having thus compromised with her wishes, Margery pleasantly yielded to Laura and accompanied her to the parlor. Clifford and Mr. Stevenson were there, and also the Effie Moffatt whom Margery had met at Quantuck, and who was now visiting Laura.

"We are just a sociable, little home-party," Mr. Stevenson said soon. "And now I propose that we have a musical evening. Miss Margery, I know you play and sing, and now I hope I may enjoy the long-postponed pleasure of hearing you; may I not?"

"Of course, you may," Clifford exclaimed, quickly, before Margery could speak. "Margery will be only too happy to sing for us to-night;



won't you, Margery?" And Clifford looked at his sister with an expression that plainly implied he meant she should sing, whether she would be happy to do so or not.

"You would not care for my music to-night, Clifford," Margery said, quietly.

"Just as much to-night as any night," he returned. "Just go to the piano and try me. There is my favorite song from 'Trovatore;' give us that, will you?"

"Not to-night."

"And pray, why 'not to-night?'" Clifford asked, fretfully, while he mimicked her tone.

Margery's answer was very low, but firm.

"It is Sunday night, Clifford, and I do not sing opera songs on Sunday."

"The better the day, the better the deed," quoted Mr. Stevenson, with a careless laugh. "Come, Miss Margery, you must sing us something. If you object to opera, why we will listen to ballads. There's 'Annie Laurie;' that's always beautiful. Now let us hear that, won't you?"

"Some other time, perhaps," Margery answered, gently.

"But not to-night? Miss Margery, you are positively cruel. Laura, where is your influence? Won't you exert it on my behalf?" And Mr. Stevenson turned, with a comical look of distress, to his cousin.



“Birds that can sing and won’t sing—you know what ought to be done with them,” Effie broke in. “Margery, I wish I could coax you to sing. I do want to hear you very much.”

“If you will let me choose my own music,” Margery said, pleasantly, “I will cheerfully sing for you.”

“Your own,” Clifford said, in a scornful voice. “I did not know before that you possessed the monopoly of any one kind. It is psalm-tunes and Dr. Watts’ hymns, I suppose, isn’t it? Yes; do, by all means, let us have a little of that hark-from-the-tombs, doleful sort of music. No doubt we will enjoy it immensely.”

Without another word, Margery went to the piano. She played a soft, sweet accompaniment, and then sang,—

“Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,  
The darkness thickens, Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me.”

“I like that,” Effie said, when she stopped. “Go on, Margery.”

“No,” Clifford interposed; “don’t ask her to do that, Miss Moffatt. Margery would go on singing hymns until morning, I don’t doubt, if we would listen to her.”

“Now, Margery,”—and he turned to his sister,—“confess that you felt very self-satisfied and



comfortable while singing that hymn. It made you feel so much better than the rest of us, didn't it now?"

"Clifford, how can you talk so?" Margery said, in a gentle, pleading voice.

"I do not find it at all difficult, I assure you," Clifford fiercely answered. "It irritates me beyond expression, Margery, to have you pretend to be so much better than the rest of us. If Sunday is not too good a day for us to sing operas and ballads, why should it be too good for you?"

"You know the reason, Clifford."

"Do I? Then I suppose it is because that old fourth commandment says something about remembering the Sabbath-day. Margery, it is a great pity that you haven't common sense. If you only had, you would see at once that what was, possibly, binding on those old Jews two thousand years ago, is no longer binding on us."

Margery thought a moment; should she drop the discussion, or should she, once for all, frankly and plainly state her views? Wisely, in her case, she decided on the latter course. When we truthfully, and without bitterness, acknowledge our belief, we will usually be left to enjoy it, after a little while, in peace. If those who oppose us cannot change us and will not consent to go with us, they will generally end by letting us alone. And, with



a dim conviction of this truth, Margery turned to her brother.

“Clifford,” she said, pleasantly, “I do not think that old Sabbath law was ever set aside. I am sure, from the teachings of the New Testament, that Christ always observed the Sabbath.”

“But our Sunday isn’t the Jewish Sabbath,” Effie objected.

“I know it; but the substitution of one day for another does not change the principle of the commandment, that a seventh of our time shall be holy unto the Lord.”

“But doesn’t St. Paul say something about one day above another, and all days alike?” Effie asked. “I am not very well versed in the Bible,” she added, with a laugh—as if her ignorance was something she found very amusing—“but I know I have heard something like that read, sometimes, when I have been to church.”

“‘One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*,’” Margery slowly repeated. “Yes; St. Paul does say that. But certainly St. Paul never meant to imply that we might secularize every day of the week. Rather he would have insisted that all the days should be holy-days, all consecrated to Christ’s use and service, as in St. Paul’s case they always were.”

There was a short silence; even those frivolous



and thoughtless young people could not deny the truth of Margery's last words. But that truth was not an agreeable one for them to consider; the contrast between their days and St. Paul's was altogether too great for conscience to be satisfied with it. And so, to escape from her self-accusations, Laura hastened to say, "Do you really think, Margery, that we ought to keep that fourth commandment just as it reads?"

"Not the letter, perhaps, but the principle," Margery said, firmly. "That, surely, is binding yet."

"Well, you are bigoted and narrow," Clifford said, with bitter emphasis. "So you would have no work done on the Sabbath?"

"Only works of necessity and love, Clifford."

"And who, pray, is to judge of what is necessary?" Effie asked, impatiently.

"I believe the Christian, who really wants to do God's will, will have little trouble in judging and deciding for himself."

"Of course," Mr. Stevenson said, "you would not read Sunday papers?"

"On the Sabbath? No."

"Nor take pleasure-drives on Sunday?"

"No."

"Nor read novels?" chimed in Laura.

"No."

"You used to write letters on Sunday, though,"



Laura said, accusingly, "I remember your Sundays at Quantuck."

"I do not write them now on Sunday," Margery quietly answered.

"Well, Margery," Clifford said, rudely, "I don't know whether you are trying to pose as a saint, or whether you really are such a consummate idiot as to believe what you say. You will find very few to sympathize with you in your narrow opinions, I can tell you that for your comfort; and if you really want to practice them in peace, I am afraid you will have to go out of the world, for most people in this enlightened nineteenth century have outgrown the superstitions to which you are so determined to cling. And really,"—and Clifford looked appealingly at Laura and Mr. Stevenson,—“I do not understand how a sister of mine can be such a simpleton.”

Oh, Vanity Fair, Vanity Fair! Still, as in the days of wise, old John Bunyan, is it true that the pilgrims who go through you “are clothed with such kind of raiment as is diverse from the raiment of any who trade in the fair.” And still of you is it true that few who trade in your midst can understand the pilgrim's speech, “for they naturally speak the language of Canaan.”

Margery did not attempt to prolong the conversation; many similar ones had preceded it, and many equally trying followed it. Often, as the



days went by, she found herself hard-pressed and sorely troubled, and sighed for the wings of a dove as well as for the spirit of one.

Often, when she could without seeming unkind, would she leave Laura in the midst of her cambric, and silk, and jeweled "satisfactions," and run off by herself, to find, as she aptly expressed it, "something real."

She was standing one morning in the Lenox Library before the exquisite statue of the "Sleeping Child," when a voice behind her said,—

"How strangely some old nursery tales appeal to the imagination and touch the heart! I can remember crying over the babes in the wood when I was a child, and first heard their sad story in rhyme; and now, that I look at them in marble, it almost seems as if they had really lived, and I had really known and loved them."

With a quick impulse, Margery turned to see the speaker. Two ladies were standing near her looking at Crawford's beautiful "Babes in the Wood," and with one swift glance Margery knew them.

"Kathie, Mrs. MacMillan," she cried in low, but joyous tones as she sprang to them.

"Margery, you precious child," Miss Woodward said, in a voice as glad as Margery's, "is it really you or only your wraith?"

"It's really, really me," Margery said, as, with



a glad disregard of both grammar and fashionable etiquette, she almost smothered Miss Woodward and Mrs. MacMillan with kisses, and laughed and sobbed together, "it's really me."

"Yes, I am sure it is Margery," Mrs. MacMillan said, tenderly. "My dear, let me look at you. How do you do? You were not well when I saw you last in Saratoga."

"Oh, that was long ago," Margery said, gayly. "I am well now and happy, I cannot tell you how happy, at seeing you again."

"Here is some one else I hope you will be glad to see," Mrs. MacMillan said, as, at that moment, a gentleman entered the hall and came quickly towards them.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," he said, in a pleasant voice Margery so well remembered. But the next second, as he recognized her, his face and tone changed.

"Miss Margery!" he exclaimed; and though Margery had few words at her command, and dared not raise her eyes because of the happy tears that were blinding them, Mrs. MacMillan, as she watched her, had good reason to feel satisfied that she was glad to see him. It was a gladness, however, that helped to make two at least of the party very quiet, and perhaps it was fortunate for all that Miss Kathie was present, and bright and sunshiny as of old.



“Archibald,” she said, laughingly, “how very appropriate your first words were! Margery, if ever a child was looked for everywhere, I believe you have been. And when we could not find you in anything else, we have made pictures, and even flowers, furnish likenesses of you.”

“I hope they were truthful,” Margery managed to say.

“As far as they went,” Mrs. MacMillan pleasantly answered. And then, with a smile, she asked, “Haven’t we gone far enough for this morning? I, at least, am very well satisfied with the result of my sight-seeing to-day. And as we have a great deal to tell and ask Margery, suppose we go back to the hotel and take her with us.”

There was but one answer to Mrs. MacMillan’s proposal, and for the remainder of that day Margery was as happy as the society and sympathy of congenial friends could make her.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### IN THE PLAIN CALLED EASE.

“Then Christian and Hopeful outwent them again, and went till they came at a delicate plain, called Ease, where they went with much content; but that plain was but narrow, so they were quickly got over it.”—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

THERE remained but two or three days now before Laura's marriage, and until that important event was passed Margery found it impossible to see much of her friends, who had but just returned from Europe and were only stopping for a short time in the city.

But the wedding-day came at last. The *trousseau*, of the most approved style and make, was completed; the presents were all received and prized—according to their costliness; the wedding-bell of sweetest and loveliest flowers was hung, and in the prescribed dress of satin, and lace, and orange blossoms, Laura Stanton stood beneath it while the few solemn words were spoken that made her Clifford Hamilton's wife. It was a beautiful wedding; so, at least, said all her friends.

To Margery, who knew how little influence for



good either Laura or Clifford would ever exert on each other, it was a sorrowful affair, and she was glad when it was over.

She expected to return home the next day; that evening she had promised to spend with her friends, and in the early dusk, as soon as the wedding reception was over and she could get away from Mrs. Stanton's, she hastened to them.

"I was almost afraid you would not be able to come, Margery," Miss Kathie said, as she affectionately welcomed her.

"Not come," Margery exclaimed; "why, I have lived on the thought of coming all day. I wanted," she said with a sigh, as she dropped wearily into a chair, "I wanted to get where things were real."

"And so you do not consider weddings realities, Miss Margery," Mr. MacMillan said, in an amused tone, as he came forward from a recess that had concealed him from her sight, and joined the little group around the fire.

"They are almost too real, sometimes," she answered, sadly; and, perceiving that the subject was a painful one, Mr. MacMillan thoughtfully changed it, and, with equal kindness and tact, exerted himself to remove her depression.

"Mother," he asked soon, "where is Miss Margery's box?"

"My box!" Margery said, in surprise. "I did



not know you had a box belonging to me, Mrs. MacMillan."

"Wait until you see it before you disclaim its ownership," Mr. MacMillan smilingly advised, while Mrs. MacMillan went into an adjoining room, and presently returned with a large and beautiful box, composed of various kinds of choice woods.

"Take it, Archie; it is rather heavy," she said.

With a smile Mr. MacMillan obeyed, and placed the mysterious box on a little table before Margery.

"Open it, if you please," he said; but Margery only gazed at it with astonished eyes.

"Are you afraid of it?" Miss Kathie asked.

"My dear, it does, I must confess, contain a little of almost everything; but I think I can truthfully assure you that there is no dynamite in it."

"And I can assure you," Mr. MacMillan said, playfully, "that it is not in any respect like Pandora's box, Miss Margery. Hope, it is true,—the hope of some day seeing you again,—had a good deal to do with its packing. But we never buried that hope in it; and I do not believe anything that can cause you trouble will be found among its contents."

Slowly Margery removed the cover, while Mrs. MacMillan came and stood beside her.

"It is your box, my dear," she said, kindly. "I hardly know with whom the thought first origin-



ated, but while we were all abroad together, one day, when we were talking of you, we decided that we would have a Margery box, and that in it should go every pretty little thing that we found and fancied might please the little friend we had left at home. Professor and Mrs. Carter contributed, and Mr. Woodward, and even Mr. Trinot, who was also with us for a short time. It was a great pleasure to prepare it for you, and now, I trust, my dear, you will find it only a pleasure to examine it."

Just what she found its examination, Margery did not try to express in words. But as, one by one, she removed the gifts that showed how constantly and fondly she had been remembered—even while she had feared that she was quite forgotten—her heart grew very full; and if she did not shed tears during her examination, it was only because Mr. MacMillan and Miss Kathie stood by and would not let her.

There was, as Miss Kathie said, a little of almost everything in that box. Some of the gifts were costly, and others very simple and inexpensive, but all were marked by a delicate taste and affectionate thoughtfulness. There were photographs and views in abundance, there were lovely specimens of Swiss carvings, there was an exquisite lace scarf from Brussels, and many lovely mementos that seemed, either directly or indirectly, to



suggest the history of the places where they were purchased. And at the bottom of the box there was a plain, flat book, containing pressed leaves and flowers from the *edelweiss* Mrs. MacMillan had gathered in a dangerous Alpine pass, to the violets, picked in a sheltered English garden.

All were beautiful, and all told the same sweet story of love and of kind consideration of her tastes and fancies.

"How kind, how very kind, you all were!" she said at last, when her examination for that evening was over. "If I had known about this precious box, I should never have grieved—as I so often did—for fear you would forget me."

"You did your best to make us forget you," Miss Kathie said, in a voice at once playful and reproachful. "Margery, why did you never write to us?"

"I could not," Margery said, briefly.

"In just what did that 'could not' consist?" Miss Kathie asked, with a secret determination to make Margery tell the whole truth.

Margery hesitated ; but she was too loyal to her father to tell the whole, and so she only said,—

"There was a reason, Kathie. It almost broke my heart not to write, but I—could not help it."

"And does that reason still exist?" Mr. MacMillan asked, with a little anxiety in his tone.

"Oh, no, no," Margery said, joyfully, "for—I



haven't told you before, but I am so glad and thankful to tell you now—father has become a Christian."

"Then your troubles are over," Miss Kathie said, gently. And Mrs. MacMillan whispered, as she bent and kissed Margery's fair, young brow, "The dear Lord is better to us than, in our faithlessness, we sometimes dare to believe he can be; is he not, dear child? He has given you one sure and precious proof that he does hear and answer prayer. Learn from it, my dear, never to be afraid to plead and trust his promises."

"Margery," Miss Kathie said soon, "when we were in London we saw George MacDonald's wonderful panorama of the Pilgrim's Progress. It did not satisfy us—quite. I do not suppose any pictorial representation of that precious old story could fully satisfy; but still it was very impressive, and at almost every step we were reminded of you. We used to wonder, some of us"—and Miss Kathie glanced smilingly at Mr. MacMillan,— "how far along you were, and I am wondering now. Where are you, Margery?"

Margery's smile was very sweet, yet touched with many memories she could not trust herself to speak of.

"Ah!" she said, softly; "I have passed through a great deal since I saw you, Kathie."

She looked as if that were true as she sat there



in the soft, bright light; but whatever her experience had been, the friends who were watching her thoughtful face felt satisfied that it had done her no harm; and with a kind smile, Mr. MacMillan said,—

“Just at present Miss Margery looks as if she was resting in the delicate plain called Ease. And I hope,” he added gently, “I hope she may long remain there.”

“Yet that plain was but narrow, so the pilgrims were ‘quickly got over it,’” Mrs. MacMillan said, musingly.

“Yes,” Mr. MacMillan answered, in a thoughtful voice; “and it is well, perhaps, for those who own themselves pilgrims, that it is narrow. If ease was always our portion here, we might shrink with bitter dread from going onward to the city. How vividly and wonderfully John Bunyan, through his prison bars, saw the panorama of life unfold and caught its meaning! I often feel as if every scene in his pilgrim’s course must have been shown him in answer to prayer. And if—beside the Bible—there was ever an inspired book in the world, I believe it is the Pilgrim’s Progress.”

“I hope you won’t make a mistake and take your texts from it sometimes,” Miss Kathie said, playfully.

“I hope not, also,” he said, with a smile; “but still I might do worse,” he added, gravely. “Bet-



ter, far better, will it be for me to teach my people to reverence the man

‘ Whose pilgrim marks the road  
And guides the progress of the soul to God,’

than to introduce them to the views and theories of many a modern Bible commentator.”

Miss Kathie smiled. “I will trust you to teach the truth,” she said; and then, laying her hand lightly on Margery’s hair, she asked,—

“Margery, do you know what Archibald is going to do now?”

Margery answered with a little, negative shake of her head.

“And you are not a bit curious, I suppose?”

“Is curiosity a virtue?” Margery asked, playfully; “because if it is, I will own that I am curious—very curious.”

“True, little daughter of mother Eve,” Miss Kathie said; “for that frank confession you shall be suitably rewarded. Know, then, that the Rev. Archibald MacMillan has been called to his home church in Bellefield, and has accepted.”

“That is my church,” Margery said, tenderly; “I still belong there.”

“I hope you will always belong there,” Mrs. MacMillan said, as her eyes turned fondly to the young girl’s face. “This arrangement is a great joy to me,” she quietly proceeded to explain.



"When Mr. Woodward decided, on account of his wife's health, to go to Colorado, the church was offered to Archie, and as he no longer has other duties that prevent, he has accepted it. Aren't you glad for me?"

"Very, very glad," Margery said, with a thrill in her voice that reminded one of joy-bells. "Oh, Mr. MacMillan, how much I wish I could hear you preach!"

He smiled. "I have favored you with a good many sermons in by-gone days, if my memory is not at fault," he said, "and I have indeed cause to feel flattered if you still want more. Suppose you come and hear my first sermon in my own church?"

Though he spoke lightly, he was none the less in earnest, and Mrs. MacMillan and Miss Kathie warmly seconded his proposal. But Margery could not accede to it.

"I have been too long from my father already," she insisted. "Where," she asked in a moment, as if the thought of her duty to her father reminded her of him, "where is Mr. MacMillan's uncle?"

"At rest," Mrs. MacMillan softly answered. "We left him in the beautiful English cemetery at Florence, peacefully awaiting a glorious resurrection."

"You must be very glad you went with him



now," Margery said, as Miss Kathie left the room and Mrs. MacMillan returned to her seat near the fire, and left Mr. MacMillan standing alone beside her.

"Yes, always glad," he answered. "It did involve a painful sacrifice,—more painful than I can tell you of now,—but I, too, have passed through a great deal since we were together in Pine Clumps. And I have learned these precious lessons—that, when God appoints a duty, its reward is sure; and where he sends his servants, he always sends his angel before them. I am glad and thankful that I went with my uncle; and just as truly, Miss Margery, I am glad, very glad, to be once more at home."

"I am glad, too," Margery said, frankly. "I should not be in the plain called 'Ease' to-night if Miss Kathie and Mrs. MacMillan and yourself were three thousand miles away. Friends have a great deal to do with that plain's pleasantness, I think, Mr. MacMillan."

"Yes, a great deal," he smilingly answered her. And then, after a moment's silence, he asked, "Do you know how much of that plain's beauty and delight—for us—depends upon you, Miss Margery?"

She looked at him with humble, innocent eyes. "No," she said, truthfully; "I do not know."

"What want of knowledge are you bewailing



now?" Miss Kathie asked, playfully, as she just then came back to them. "Whatever it is, it is too late for you to enlighten her to-night, Archibald; for here is Mrs. Stanton's carriage and maid, also, after Miss Hamilton."

"Then I must go at once," Margery said, in a regretful voice; "and I am going home early to-morrow morning with mother, so I shall not see you again. But there is one comfort," she continued, more cheerfully, "I can write now, and my letters won't be at all like angels' visits, Kathie; for they will be both numerous and frequent."

"We will welcome all the letters," Mrs. MacMillan promised. And Mr. MacMillan, as he went with Margery to the carriage, said: "I shall not say good-by now, Miss Margery; for if I cannot see you to-morrow, I will find my way out to your home before I leave the city. May I?"

"Oh, yes," Margery said, with eager gladness; "and if you can, come in the afternoon, after three, Mr. MacMillan; for father will be at home then, and he will be very glad to see you."

"I shall be happy to meet your father," Mr. MacMillan quietly answered, and, with a smile, he closed the carriage-door and watched the father's daughter drive away.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### BY THE HILL CALLED LUCRE.

"Now, at the farther side of that plain was a little hill, called Lucre, and in that hill a silver mine. . . . Then I saw in my dream, that a little off the road, over against the silver mine, stood Demas, . . . who said to Christian and his fellow, . . . 'Here is a silver mine, and some digging in it for treasure; if you will come, with a little pains, you may richly provide for yourselves.'"—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

NEITHER on the next day, nor the day after did Margery see Mr. MacMillan again. But on the third day, instead of the call she was so gladly anticipating, there came a brief note.

"My dear Miss Margery," it read:

"I regret exceedingly that I am obliged to write this note and bid you good-by with my pen instead of with my voice, as I had hoped to do. But all our plans have been suddenly and sorrowfully changed by the serious illness of Professor Carter. We are summoned to him and must go at once.

"I am very sorry that in my first letter to you I should be compelled to pain you, as I know my tidings about Professor Carter cannot fail to do. But do not think of this intelligence as 'bad news,' Miss Margery. We will pray and trust that our dear friend may be spared to us;



but if our prayers—for some wise and tender reason—cannot be granted, we will only remember that the holiday-time has come, and that the Father's child, after long, weary years at school, has gone with a glad heart home.

“My mother and Kathie send many tender farewell messages. I need not repeat them; by your own thoughts and emotions I know you will be able to understand theirs. If possible, I hope to see you again soon. Until then, Miss Margery, may the memory of the friends who would gladly shield you from all life's sorrows, and the more precious memory of him who sends no sorrow that he cannot soothe, keep you abiding in peace in the ‘delicate plain, called Ease.’

“Your true friend,

“ARCHIBALD MACMILLAN.”

Margery's face grew very sad as she read that little note, and many tears fell on it; for her disappointment was great, and her love for Professor Carter made her feel as if a new sorrow was already folding its dark wings about her heart.

She did not brood over her disappointed hopes and mournful fears long. Resolutely she brushed the troublesome tears away, dropped the little note into the beautiful box, already so fragrant with many lovely memories, and then, with patient faith, devoted herself to making her home as sunshiny and cheerful as she could.

It was not a very easy task; for Mrs. Hamilton had returned home exhausted from the gayety and dissipation of her city visit, and was in a



weak, nervous state, that rendered her more peevish and unreasonable than usual. She fretted and worried about everything. If Margery sang, she reproached her with having no consideration for her nerves ; and if the weary girl ever looked sad, she complained that she made no effort to entertain and amuse her.

“One must be very strong to avoid being troubled by troublesome things,” says a wise old English preacher, and Margery laid no claim to being strong ; but she knew whose grace was sufficient for her, and in the all-sufficiency of Christ she found enough for all her needs.

So the winter days went slowly and rather sadly by, until Clifford and Laura returned from their wedding journey and came home for a visit. Their coming aroused and cheered Mrs. Hamilton, but it brought fresh annoyances to Margery. Clifford and Laura were very gay ; a large circle of young and fashionable acquaintances gathered around them, and, among others, Mr. Stevenson was a regular and, indeed, a daily visitor. Margery would have gladly avoided seeing him, but Mrs. Hamilton would not allow her to do so.

She considered Mr. Stevenson a friend, she said, and Margery should not insult him in her house and presence.

And so, to please her mother, Margery was obliged to receive him when he called, and forced



to listen, patiently as she could, to the empty, common-place remarks and frivolous comments on society that with him passed for conversation. She gave him no encouragement, and refused his attentions always when she could, but, for some reason, he persisted in annoying her with them.

Life did not look very bright to Margery in those days. It is a hard trial to be obliged to live in what Helps calls "an atmosphere of uncongeniality;" and, apart from her father, there was no one, in Margery's home, who loved the things that she loved, or sympathized in any of her tastes and favorite pursuits. But if that winter was a hard and trying one for Margery, it was likewise a hard and trying one for many other people.

Business, as Mr. Hamilton occasionally remarked, was very dull. In many homes the husbands and fathers looked care-worn and anxious, and almost every day the papers reported the suspension of well-known business firms and the failure of men who had long been supposed to possess almost unlimited wealth.

In a vague way—much as if such troubles belonged to another sphere, and could never in any way affect them—Mrs. Hamilton and Margery were conscious of these financial difficulties. That they could, in the slightest degree, trouble or embarrass Mr. Hamilton's business, they never suspected. Margery noticed that her father was more



silent than usual, and often irritable and nervous, and feared that he was not well; and, Mrs. Hamilton laughingly remarked, that she believed her husband was growing miserly as he grew old, for once or twice when she had asked him for money, he had fretfully told her that he did not possess a gold mine. That all these signs were indications of serious business trouble they never dreamed, until one afternoon, late in the winter, Mr. Hamilton came home at an earlier hour than usual, and threw himself with a groan on the sofa in his wife's room.

"What is the matter?" Mrs. Hamilton asked, carelessly, as she looked up from her embroidery. "You are home earlier than usual to-night. Aren't you well?"

"Matter?" Mr. Hamilton answered, in an excited voice, "there is enough the matter, I can assure you. Well? Yes, I am as well as a man can be, who has been on the verge of purgatory for weeks, and who is now fairly in it."

Mrs. Hamilton dropped the needle she had just threaded, and gazed at her husband in blank astonishment.

"What—do you—mean?" she asked, slowly.

"Mean?" Mr. Hamilton exclaimed, quickly. "You will soon know what I mean." But the next moment, as he looked at his wife and remembered how perfectly unconscious she was of his



trouble, his voice changed. "I am very sorry to tell you," he said, with a deep sigh, "but you must be told soon, and you had better hear it from me than from strangers. I am in great trouble. I have been struggling for weeks to get through these hard times without failing, but the crash has come to-day, and to-morrow my failure will be publicly announced." And, with another weary sigh, Mr. Hamilton threw himself back on the sofa, from which, in his excitement, he had arisen.

"What! have *you failed?*" Mrs. Hamilton cried, in a voice that told, better than words, how perfectly impossible she had always supposed it would be for him to do so; "it is n't possible! What made you?"

"A very natural cause," Mr. Hamilton said, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone; "simply the want of money."

Mrs. Hamilton considered that stern fact in silence for a few moments. "What are you going to do?" she asked soon in an anxious voice that showed she was beginning to comprehend the situation; "why don't you try to raise the money—somehow?"

"Why don't I try to raise it?" Mr. Hamilton repeated wearily. "It is just like a woman to ask that question,—as if I had not made every possible and impossible effort in my power to



raise it —. My dear, I wish you would answer your own question. How would you advise me to raise the money, hey? By whistling, as they are said to raise the wind sometimes in a calm on the water?"

Mrs. Hamilton wisely ignored that contemptuous question; but she said in a moment: "Why don't you apply to some of your business friends for help?"

"Simply because there is n't much friendship in business," Mr. Hamilton answered, with some bitterness. "When a man is sinking, there are very few who are willing to hold him up, at the risk of sinking themselves."

"There is Mr. Stevenson," Mrs. Hamilton suggested soon; "he is n't a business man; but he certainly is what you call a great capitalist, is n't he?"

"Stevenson? Yes; thanks to his grandfather's and father's industry, he is almost a money-king; but I do not like to apply to him," Mr. Hamilton added soberly.

"There are more reasons why you should, than why you should not," Mrs. Hamilton replied, meaningly. "How do you suppose he will feel when it is noised abroad that you have failed?"

"No worse than some others, I imagine," Mr. Hamilton said gloomily.

"Is it really a hopeless failure?" Mrs. Hamil-



ton inquired now. "Could n't you, with such help as Mr. Stevenson would be able to give you, go on with your business?"

Mr. Hamilton considered that question a while. "Yes," he said then; "if Mr. Stevenson would help me, I could go on."

"Then," Mrs. Hamilton said, with great decision, "I think that for my sake—to say nothing of any one else—you ought to apply to him."

With much secret reluctance, but with the conviction that it was his last resort, Mr. Hamilton did finally decide to ask Mr. Stevenson for assistance; and Mr. Stevenson—to do him justice—responded cheerfully and generously to his application.

The greater part of Mr. Hamilton's property was swept away; but he was enabled to satisfy his creditors, and go on with his business with the proud satisfaction of knowing that no man had lost or suffered through him.

And that, Margery said joyfully, was something to be so thankful for that it did not matter at all if they were poorer.

"I do not mind poverty, mother," she said, one day, when Mrs. Hamilton was lamenting some new economy that Mr. Hamilton deemed necessary in their domestic affairs. "We can easily discharge a servant or two and be none the less comfortable; but I do not think I ever could



survive disgrace, or the consciousness that those I loved were dishonorable."

"You are talking like a sentimental school-girl," Mrs. Hamilton said impatiently. "You know very little about poverty. It is a most fruitful source of misery and discomfort in this world, I can tell you."

"I do not believe it need to be, though," Margery insisted, "and if it is what God has chosen for us, mother, I am sure it must be better for us, than the riches he has taken away."

"Nonsense," Mrs. Hamilton said, in a severe voice, "if you cannot talk sensibly, Margery, I wish you would not talk at all. You are not reduced to poverty yet, and there is no reason," she added, with some emphasis, "why you ever should be."

"No," Margery answered, cheerfully, "it is true we are not reduced to poverty, but father's circumstances are certainly greatly changed. I know—for he told me so himself last night—that, apart from his business, he has very little property to depend upon; and, mother, I think we would all be a great deal happier if we would at once cheerfully accommodate ourselves to our circumstances. It seems to me that to struggle to keep up appearances, and seem like rich people, when we are only comfortably well off, is one of the hardest and falsest things to do. And I believe



it is one of the most useless also, for we deceive no one with our affectation of wealth, and, most assuredly, we are never deceived ourselves."

"Nonsense," Mrs. Hamilton said again, "you are a very visionary, impractical girl, Margery. I consider that we are in duty bound to keep up appearances. I am sure I do not know what would become of you and your prospects if we did not try to do so. Do you know," she asked soon, "how much your father is indebted to Mr. Stevenson?"

"Yes," Margery answered, "father told me. Mr. Stevenson has been very kind, and I feel very grateful to him."

Mrs. Hamilton looked pleased. "I hope you will be ready to thank him suitably then, sometime, when he gives you the opportunity," she said with meaning.

A troubled, anxious expression passed over Margery's young face, but Mrs. Hamilton did not appear to notice it.

"Margery," she said, "I want to talk very seriously to you. There are certain questions that I believe in leaving young girls to decide for themselves—of course. Still I think the young should always accept and follow the advice of their parents and friends, who are older than they are, and know much more about the world and its requirements—You think so, too, do



you not?" And Mrs. Hamilton waited for an answer.

"Yes, mother, I suppose so—."

"Your answer did not require that 'suppose,'" Mrs. Hamilton proceeded. "Well, now, Margery, listen to me. You know your father's business affairs very well it appears; you know that you are no longer an heiress, but that if anything were to incapacitate your father for business to-morrow you would be a poor girl, and really obliged to labor for your own support. And, however in your ignorance you may fancy it, Margery, I can tell you, that a working-woman's lot in life is full of trials and hardships, and it is painful, inexpressibly painful to me, to think that such a fate may ever befall you."

"Then do not think of it, mother," Margery said gently.

"I must think of it, because I want to prevent it," Mrs. Hamilton replied with some warmth. "Margery I would not—of course—want you, in deciding upon one of the most important events in your life—you understand what I mean—to be influenced solely by money. But it is natural for a mother to want to see her daughter well provided for, and, Margery, I believe a golden opportunity will soon be offered to you, and when it is I trust you will be sensible, and act with prudence and discretion."



"Mother," Margery began in a quick, pained voice, "mother, I am not afraid to be a poor girl, I am only afraid of—"

"Stop," Mrs. Hamilton said composedly. "This is not a subject to argue, Margery. You know my wishes now. I have advised you for your own good and I have no more to say. Besides," she added, as she glanced at the clock, "it is almost dinner time and you ought to dress. You know"—with a little stress on the words—"you know, Mr. Stevenson dines here to-night."

Mrs. Hamilton's information proved correct. Mr. Stevenson did dine with them that night, and after dinner, by a fortunate combination of circumstances—as Mrs. Hamilton and Laura thought at the time—he was left alone with Margery in the library.

What passed in that interview Margery never told but in a few days Mr. Stevenson took Laura into his confidence, and she at once began with great earnestness to fight her cousin's battle for him.

"Margery," she said, "I think it was perfectly outrageous for you to treat Rich. as you did the other evening. He has told me all about it, poor fellow, and now I am going to talk to you seriously about your folly."

"Better not, Laura," Margery said quietly, "it is all past and over now, fortunately, and why should you trouble yourself about it?"



"Why? well—because—for one reason, I do not like to see you losing such a grand opportunity to do well for yourself. You are not a rich girl any longer, and you are a very foolish one to throw away such a chance of securing wealth and position."

Margery sighed. "It is useless for us to discuss this subject, Laura," she said, gently, "for we shall never agree."

"We will disagree then. Tell me why did you not accept Richard Stevenson?"

"I would rather not tell you, Laura."

"But you ought to tell me. You have pained and disappointed us all. You ought to give us the satisfaction of knowing your reasons, if you have any. Why did you do so, Margery?"

"Because," Margery answered, now in a quiet, serious voice, "because, Laura, grateful as I am to Mr. Stevenson for his kindness to my father, I do not love him, and he could never make me love him. He is not a Christian, he is not even a true gentleman. He has spent so much of his time in studying etiquette, and all the little requirements of fashionable society, that he has had none left to devote to nobler and more serious pursuits. And then"—and Margery's voice was sad in its gravity now—"I am sorry to say it, but I know that he not only indulges in wine, but indulges very freely. What safety and happiness, Laura,



can a woman have who is married to such a man?"

"I should like," Laura said, sarcastically, "I should like to know what the gratitude you boast of amounts to?"

"My gratitude," Margery said, gently. "It will make me pray for him, and wish him well all my life, Laura. It cannot do more."

Laura moved uneasily in her luxurious chair. "Well," she said, presently, as she arose to leave the room, "it is throwing words away to try to reason with you. I do think you are the most absurd girl I ever knew"—an opinion that Clifford and his mother fully endorsed.

For a little while they hoped that Margery would change her mind, but that hope was a futile one, and they were soon forced to abandon it.

In a few weeks Mr. Stevenson sailed for Europe, and before many months elapsed they heard of his engagement to a handsome society belle, and Margery, to her own great comfort, never met him again.

Margery, however, was not the first young Christian whom the world has sought to allure with its brilliant offers of wealth and social position, and she will not be the last. The silver mine in the hill called lucre, is as real to-day as it was, when long ago, Demas called to Christian and Hopeful "to turn aside" as they went by,



“and with a little pains richly provide for themselves.” The temptation to obey that call is as strong—it may be even stronger—to-day than it was then. And still the only safe answer for all such tempted ones must be that of the pilgrims ;

“We will not stir a step, but still keep on our way.”



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### OUT OF CASTLE DOUBTING.

“Then they fell to demolishing Doubting-castle; and that, you know, might with ease be done, since Giant Despair was dead.”—*Pilgrim's Progress, Part II.*

FOR several weeks after Mr. and Mrs. Mac-Millan reached him Professor Carter continued very ill, and the reports Margery received of him were sad and discouraging; but, as the spring approached, there came a change for the better. Very slowly, but, to the great joy of his friends, surely, he gained in health; and, at last, though he might never be a strong man again, his physician pronounced him out of danger. The letter that brought this cheering information to Margery was from Miss Kathie, and it contained a very pressing invitation from Professor Carter and his wife for her to come and make them a long visit. Could she go? It was in a beautiful Pennsylvania town, a long distance from her own home, that Professor Carter resided, and it was with much uncertainty that Margery carried the letter



to her father ; but his consent was most cheerfully given.

“It will be a pleasant change for you, my little girl,” he said, kindly, “and I have business in that direction and will take you there myself.”

And so, to Margery’s great satisfaction, the train, one lovely spring morning, dropped her at Professor Carter’s station, and in a little while she was in the midst of her kind friends, laughing and talking like the happy, untroubled girl she really was.

“You are just the tonic uncle John needed,” Miss Kathie said, as she noticed how the professor brightened under the sunshine Margery seemed to have brought with her. “I believe I have been growing stupid lately, and since Mrs. MacMillan and Archibald left us we have been very quiet and dull.”

Miss Kathie did look and seem quieter and sadder than of old ; and, after the first day or two of her visit, Margery often found herself wondering as to the cause of the great change she could not help perceiving in her kind friend. That there was a cause Margery was sure. In truth, she had always known that some cloud had long ago shadowed Miss Kathie’s sky and never rolled away ; but in just what that cloud consisted Margery could not tell.

There are some troubles that can be confided



only to God, and Kathie Woodward's whole life had been one of beautiful obedience to the words she had once chosen as her motto :

"Bury thy sorrow, let others be blest.

Give them the sunshine. Tell Jesus the rest."

But the sadness she had so long and bravely hidden in her own heart seemed to be manifesting itself now in her outward life, and Margery grieved and puzzled over it, and watched for an explanation, and most unexpectedly, one day, received it.

"Let me see," Professor Carter said, suddenly, one morning while Miss Kathie and Margery were sitting near him with their sewing ; "let me see. "It is almost three years, Miss Margery, since I gave you your first lesson in natural history, on the old beach at Quantuck, isn't it?"

"Yes," Margery answered, as she raised her bright, interested face from her work and looked gratefully at the old man. "I've never forgotten those jelly and star-fishes, Professor Carter,"—and her voice was very tender now,—"I have never forgotten that other lesson either—my first Sunday-school lesson in that Quantuck chapel."

Professor Carter smiled. "You are an apt and willing little pupil," he said. "If all my scholars had been like you, the record of my life-work would be far more satisfactory than it is. It is



strange, passing strange," he continued in a moment, as if thinking aloud, "that a word to one will sometimes produce such weighty results, while words upon words to another are no more

"Than snowflakes falling in a river,  
One moment seen, then lost forever."

"How do you account for it, uncle John?" Miss Kathie asked, and Margery noticed that her voice trembled as if, for some cause, she was deeply touched.

"I cannot account for it," he answered, gravely. "Only this I know: it is not for the want of the spirit's willingness to bless the sowing of every good seed. But the birds of the air are many, and a willful heart is like granite, and the blessing which we do not wish to receive is never forced upon us."

"It sometimes seems strange to me," Miss Kathie said, "that God does not compel people to believe. Christ constrained his disciples to go into the ship, you remember."

"Yes,—his disciples," Professor Carter answered, with the happy light that Margery so well remembered illuminating his face; "they belonged to him. They would rather be constrained to do his will than left free to do their own. But do we anywhere read of his constraining or compelling the people who followed him to be healed



or blessed against their own wishes? By every tender means in his power, by loving words and merciful deeds, he sought to draw them to him. But he used no force then; he uses none now. Our wills are our own."

"“Our wills are ours to make them thine,”” Mrs. Carter, who had a few moments before entered the room, softly quoted now. “I remember,” she added, “hearing Hugh Trinot say, that sentence ‘In memoriam’ seemed to him to possess little sense and less truth.”

“Poor Hugh!” Professor Carter said, with a sigh. “If ever a man was determined to shiver in the darkness when he might rejoice in the sunshine, Hugh is that man. He prides himself on his unbelief. He cherishes it, just as I have sometimes seen a weed cherished in a garden, until all the delicate, rare plants near it were choked by its poisonous roots, and overshadowed by its noxious leaves.”

A low, quickly-suppressed sob escaped just then from Miss Kathie, and as Margery glanced at her she was surprised to see that her head was bent low over her work, and that tears were falling thick and fast upon it.

Mrs. Carter saw it all, and hastened to say, more cheerfully, “I have felt much encouraged about Hugh since Archibald told me that he had owned to him that he would gladly part with this world



and everything that made it dear, if he could once truly say, in the faith of a Christian,—I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

As if she could endure no more, Miss Kathie hurried from the room, and, as he glanced sorrowfully after her, Professor Carter said,—

“Hugh has at least renounced the dearest thing this world could give him in order to enjoy his unbelief. And if he ever does say that he believes, there will be no doubt of his sincerity. Well, we shall see if his words to Archibald were true. For this, at least, is true: when a man really wants—more than anything else—to believe, God will surely give him the desire of his heart.”

The conversation ceased just there, but to Margery it had been a wonderful revelation, and yet, after all, her greatest surprise was that she was not more surprised. So many little words and events came back to her now, that Margery only wondered that she had never known before what she knew now so well.

She remembered the earnest words Miss Kathie had once spoken in her hearing. “I would not marry a man who could wrong, or insult, or despise my own father; and how is it possible for me—if I am truly a Christian—to feel less sensitive for my heavenly Father’s honor, or to care less, if those I love treat him with disrespect?”

And Margery well understood now that Kathie



Woodward had been true to her own convictions of right and wrong, and before seeking happiness for herself had sought the honor of her God. And still, with even this knowledge, Margery wondered a little at Miss Woodward's unusual depression, for this, she thought, was no new trial. Long before she knew her, Kathie Woodward had made her choice, and so, Margery argued, that could scarcely be the cause of her present sadness. What was the cause?

Margery's question was answered in a day or two by Mrs. Carter, who told her that Mr. Trinot's business was closely connected with a large house in China; the partner, who had long resided there, was soon to return home, and Mr. Trinot had decided to go out and take his place. He was to go very soon and would probably remain many years, and with the prospect of this long separation before them, he had made one more last appeal to Miss Kathie, only to receive the same sad, but firm answer.

No matter what other women in her place would have done; no matter whether her decision was wise or unwise when judged by the world's standards, Kathie Woodward remained true to her own deep convictions of duty. She would not marry a man who was not a Christian.

The very day after Mrs. Carter had told all this to Margery a telegram came from Mr. Trinot.



He was just about to start on his journey, he telegraphed, and would go from New York to San Francisco by railroad, and from there, by steamer, to Canton. And as he could not see them again, he sent his last good-by and best wishes to them all.

None ever knew how Kathie Woodward spent the first few hours after the arrival of that telegram.

All was over now. If she had hoped for another message than this, that hope must now be given up. And if she could not understand why her many fervent prayers were all denied and left unanswered, still she must trust. And she did trust. Low at her Saviour's feet she told her sorrow, and in the silence—through her sobs—faith heard his answer, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And resting on that sacred promise, Kathie Woodward whispered humbly, "Not my will—but thine—be done." And then, once more burying her sorrow, she went forth, to be to her friends, as she had ever been, their comfort and their blessing.

With this one exception, of the sadness caused by her sympathy for Miss Kathie, Margery's first days at Professor Carter's were all bright and beautiful as the spring sky that smiled above her head.

Mrs. MacMillan had promised soon to visit



them, and one lovely May evening she suddenly appeared before them.

"Did you drop from the sunset, sister?" Professor Carter asked, as he pointed towards the western sky, that was just then unusually brilliant in its scarlet and gold.

"No," she said softly, as her hand rested on his silvery locks; "I have only come to walk a little way towards the sunset with you."

His face lit up as if some of that sunset light had just touched it.

"When we reach the sunset," he said, "it will only be to find that it is just sunrise in another land. It may be night *here*, but it will be the dawn of a glad morning *there*. When I am gone, I want you all to think of that. And now," he said, brightly, before any one could feel sad, "tell us about Archibald."

He was well, Mrs. MacMillan answered, and had gone to New York on business and would visit them on his return.

"Did you," she asked soon, when Miss Kathie for a few moments had left the room; "did you see the account of the recent shipwreck on the Pacific?"

No, strange to say, they had not seen it; and with sad interest they listened while Mrs. MacMillan read to them of the great steamer that, while sailing happily over the peaceful ocean, had



suddenly been wrapped in flames. She read of the self-control of the passengers, and especially of the noble heroism of one of them—a young man by the name of Trinot—who had ably aided the captain in his efforts to maintain order and save life, and who, at the final moment, when the last boat was already well-filled and there was only room for one more, had quietly given up his place to another, and saying “if there is a God, I will trust him now,” gone down—as was supposed—with the burning steamer.

It was owing to this sorrowful accident, Mrs. MacMillan explained, that Archibald had gone to New York. He hoped to get fuller accounts there, as the passengers on one of the boats had been picked up by a steamer bound for San Francisco, and probably some of them, who belonged in New York, would soon arrive there.

Long before Mrs. MacMillan finished her sad story Miss Woodward returned. She did not lament nor give vent to any passionate, uncontrollable grief. She only said, in a voice so calm that those who loved her felt that any outbreak of sorrow would have been better: “God’s hands are very tender, and he is in them.” And then she suffered Mrs. MacMillan to lead her to her room and put her to bed like a child, and for days it seemed as if, from the terrible sinking and utter prostration that had come upon her, she would never rise again.



It was more than a week since Mrs. MacMillan's arrival, and still Mr. MacMillan remained in New York. At last, one day a telegram came: "I will be with you to-night. I have found a friend, and will bring him with me."

Who could that friend be?

They did not dare to indulge in any hopes. They destroyed the telegram, and only told Kathie that Archibald was expected, and then through the long day they waited—in the patience that submissive prayer gave them—for the travelers to come.

It was in the beautiful, purple twilight of the May evening that the carriage returned from the station, and Archibald MacMillan sprang out, gave one look to the group assembled to meet him, and then turned, with tender care, to assist his companion, who, weak and trembling, leaned heavily upon him.

Though their eyes were almost blinded by their tears, they did not need to ask who he was. The sea had given up its dead. Nay—better than that—out of God's great love he had been given back to them. With a gladness of heart that words could never express they welcomed him, and with a joy such as the angels feel in heaven they heard his first broken words to Kathie.

"I am willing—at last—to be a Christian. And now—I want you—to take me—like a little child—by the hand—and lead me—to Christ."



His story was soon told. It was a wonderful one.\* When, in that moment of supreme trial, he stood upon the burning steamer, with—as it seemed—only a choice of death, in one of its two most fearful forms, before him, it rushed upon him, with overwhelming force—“Kathie’s faith is true.” And then came the sudden resolution to trust in Kathie’s God. The next instant—as if impelled by some force he could not resist—he found himself in the sea.

All his senses seemed strangely keen. He had never felt more self-possessed, never more truly the master of himself.

At the first alarm of fire, before he rushed on deck, as if directed by a wisdom not his own, he had filled his pockets with some crackers that chanced—as he would once have said—to be left on a plate in the cabin.

On the deck of the steamer, in the same mechanical way, he had noticed a piece of rope and a small board. He knew of no use they could be to him, but *something* guided him, and he picked them up.

Now, as he struggled in the water, he saw a small scaffold that had, in some way, got detached

\* This story, in all its details, is the exact experience of a gentleman who was a passenger on the steamship “Atlantic” when it was lost. The “Atlantic” was not destroyed by fire, and the gentleman was not a skeptic, but from the time Mr. Trinot puts the crackers in his pocket to the moment of his rescue, I have closely followed the truth.



from the burning steamer. To grasp it—as it drifted near him—and to climb upon it, was his first impulse, and it was quickly acted upon. He could only stand upon it, and soon the standing—without any support—grew intolerably tiresome. But now the board, that he had—as it seemed at the time—so aimlessly picked up, came into service. Planting it before him on his scaffold, he leaned upon it, and thus through that first long night went floating over the waves, unpitied, unwatched and unguided, save by the God whom all his life he had so recklessly denied. The burning steamer soon went down. The boats, with their heavy loads of immortal souls, were quickly out of sight, and when the morning broke no sign of human life was near him. The sky was radiant above him; the sea, in its vast, lonely immensity, was all around him, and hopelessly, helplessly—as it seemed to him—he drifted on.

As the long hours of that terrible day went by he found himself growing increasingly weak and weary; even the support his board gave proved now insufficient, and in bitter despair he was just feeling that his struggle for life could not last much longer, when, thud! thud! against his scaffold something came knocking. Hardly conscious of what he was doing, still led by the Power that had directed his every action, he grasped the object and found it a large, tin-lined basket.



And now the rope, that—for no apparent purpose—he had saved from the steamer, found its work to do. With it he lashed the basket securely to his scaffold, and then sitting down in it, was conscious, even in that moment of desolation, of a delightful sense of relief and rest.

And so, through that second lonely night he floated in his basket, while the stars looked coldly down upon him, the sea seemed to cry hungrily around him, and his sleep—when at long intervals it came to him—was filled with home-sick dreams and visions, that made his waking seem more bitter than death.

But the second long night passed, and the third day dawned. It was a dreary day; the clouds that frowned above him were dark and threatening, and the wind, as it wailed around him, roughened the waves, and heightened the peril of his enforced voyage. Soon his basket began to fill, and now his last hope failed him.

“I am going—” he thought desperately—“and going I know not where—Oh, if I had but Kathie’s God, and Kathie’s faith.”

Even as that despairing cry passed his lips, there came, for the second time, that strange thud! thud! as of something knocking against his raft.

He did not care much what it might be, but still the Will that guided made him look around.



What was it? Only a tin-can—but its mission was to save his life.

Seizing it, he bailed out his basket, and through all that day and the third night, by incessant bailing, he kept himself afloat.

The fourth day broke, and now his exhaustion was so great that he well knew he could not survive much longer. Wearily—before closing his eyes, as he thought he soon must, for the last time—he looked around him; far off in the blue distance he saw a sail. To tear off some of his clothing, to grasp again the board, that had already done him such service, and with them to make a signal of distress, was his next act.

Would that signal be seen and answered?

God—the God he had always denied—the God who had hitherto so wonderfully preserved him—alone knew. In an agony of hope and fear he watched and waited—as those wait who know that their life depends upon the issue of the next few moments. Slowly, very slowly, the white sails approached him. Once they seemed to recede, and with a groan he closed his eyes and felt that all was over. But when he looked again the distance was lessening. Over the hungry waves they were surely coming nearer. On they came—nearer and still nearer—until, at last, friendly voices sounded in his ears, strong hands were stretched out to rescue him, and, weak and helpless



as a child, he felt himself lifted from his basket, and knew that he was saved.

The God in whom Kathie believed had been faithful to the trust he committed to him.

“Let us sing,” Professor Carter said, gently, breaking the silence that had followed Mr. Trinot’s last words. And, with hearts so full of thanksgiving that—“like dumb birds that die of their imprisoned gladness”—it seemed as if they must break if they did not give utterance to their gratitude, they sang “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

“Amen!” Mr. Trinot said, as the last note of the grand old doxology died away—in a voice that only Kathie heard. And with the echo of that “Amen” thrilling her heart, it seemed to her that forever more the language of her soul would be “So be it, Lord,” to all her Father willed.

There still remained many questions for Mr. Trinot and his friends to decide. There were many old doubts, that he had cherished for years, to be forever laid to rest, and many new lessons for him to learn in the school of Christ that he had now entered as a pupil.

For years Hugh Trinot had lain a helpless prisoner in Giant Despair’s dungeon. Now, with the “key called Promise,” he unlocked his prison-door, and then, armed with prayer and his Bible,



he went forth, like another Great-heart, to demolish Doubting-castle.

He did not pause to parley and argue with every subtle doubt that presented itself. Had he done so, he might have remained in bondage to Giant Despair forever; but bravely saying, "I know in whom I believe, yes, and will believe," he fought his battle; and, for him, Doubting-castle was soon a ruined heap. And always after his word of advice to all doubting souls was,—

"Entertain all the strangers you please, but never admit a doubt; for, though they may come in the disguise of angels, you will find, at last, that they are destroying fiends. You can will to do everything else; will, then, to believe, and you will never fail to find that he who puts his will on God's side is sure of victory."

And now there is little more to tell of Kathie and Mr. Trinot.

One fair, spring day they stood before Archibald MacMillan, who spoke a few solemn words, and then, in glad content, they went forth to spend the rest of their lives together.

"How good God has been to them!" Margery said, as she watched them drive away.

"And yet they have both been under his cloud and passed through his sea," Mrs. MacMillan gently answered. "But through all her trials one never doubted, and according to her faith it



has been unto her. Margery, dear, we wonder, often, that our prayers remain unanswered; but whenever, in our unbelief, we are tempted to murmur at the failure or delay that seems to us so strange, let us pause and remember that the promise is,—‘According to your faith.’”



## CHAPTER XIX.

### IN THE CHAMBER OF PEACE.

"Now, while they lay here, and waited for the good hour, there was a noise in the town that there was a post come from the Celestial City."—*Pilgrim's Progress, Part II.*

IT was a still, sweet, summer morning; roses were nodding in at the open windows, and in and out among the old trees bright-winged birds were gayly dancing, and oriole songs, that seemed like remembered strains of Eden's happy music, were filling the world with melody and joy.

Out under the shade of a beautiful magnolia tree in Professor Carter's garden Margery was sitting alone; but there was a shadow on her face, and in the gladness of the summer life around her she had, that morning, no part and felt no sympathy.

The house was strangely still; no steps echoed through its broad hall, no voices sounded pleasantly through its open doors and windows; everywhere it seemed pervaded by the hush that falls upon life

"When, in the shadow of some great affliction,  
The soul sits dumb."



It was the morning of the day appointed for Mrs. Trinot's return to them for a short visit, and with none but glad anticipations loving hearts had looked forward to it; but during the night a messenger from the silent land had come, and now they knew that this was the day that God had appointed for one of his long-tried, faithful servants to return home.

Up in his pleasant chamber, watched over by the wife who through so many years had shared his joys and sorrows, Professor Carter was slowly and peacefully going away.

There was nothing, so far as this world went, to hope; but there was also nothing, as faith gladly whispered to them, to fear. A Christian was only going to Christ, and, even while their tears fell, they could say to him and to each other,—

“Beloved, it is well.”

Down the gravel walk a firm step echoed soon, and Margery looked up to see Mr. MacMillan coming towards her.

“What a day for the coronation!” he said, gently, as he sat down on the grass beside her.

Margery understood him; but the thought of all that “coronation” meant for them broke down the calm she had all the morning struggled to maintain, and with tearful eyes she looked at him.



"If we, too, could only be there to see it," she said, with a sob.

"Do you remember the glass through which the pilgrims, when on the Delectable Mountains, looked towards the Celestial City?" Mr. MacMillan asked, in a moment.

Margery's tears were her only answer. She was hardly able yet to look through that glass, and see "something like the gate, and also some of the glory of the place."

Kind, sympathizing eyes, that felt and shared her grief, watched her for a few minutes, and then a gentle hand touched hers, and a voice, at once tender and firm, said,—

"Stop, Miss Margery! Our friend has charged us to shed no tears, but rather to give thanks for him. It is with him, as it was with Mr. Standfast when he, too, went over the river. Do you remember how that was?"

"No," she whispered; "tell me."

And in a voice whose very tone was calming Mr. MacMillan softly repeated,—

"Now there was a great calm at that time in the river; wherefore Mr. Standfast, when he was about half-way in, stood awhile, and talked with his companions.' That is what our friend is doing now," Mr. MacMillan said soon, "and he has sent me to bring you to him."



"Oh, I—cannot—go," Margery said, with another burst of tears.

"I think you can," Mr. MacMillan said, soothingly. "There is nothing to shrink from. He is so happy himself that his only thought is of making others so. Come, Miss Margery." And without another word, Margery let him lead her towards the house.

Very gently in the hall Mr. MacMillan removed her hat and drew back a curl of sunny hair that had fallen low on her forehead.

"We are going to the Chamber of Peace," he said, softly. "Already he is resting there—on the heart of Jesus—and for his sake we must not show sorrow. No, no more tears," he gently commanded; "I forbid them." And with a great effort Margery obeyed, and with a composed face followed him to the sick-room.

They were all assembled there, and all quiet and calm as the beautiful day itself. Mrs. Carter even looked towards Margery with a tender smile, and Professor Carter said, in his own familiar voice, as they came to his bedside,—

"So you found my little girl, did you, Archibald? Margery, dear child,"—and he reached for and took her trembling hand,—  
"I showed you first the way to heaven, and now you must not mourn that I am going there before you. You must only remember that in one of our



Father's many mansions I shall be waiting—when you come—to welcome you home.”

Margery could give no answer to those tender words, and for a long time after no one spoke in that quiet room.

Without birds chirped, and flowers unfolded, and clouds gathered across the sky and darkened for a while its sunshine, and sent a passing shower down to the thirsty earth, but soon broke into filmy bits and through their rifts let heaven's own blue smile brightly down once more. All nature's beautiful processes went on unchecked and unsadened, for it is only our poor, faithless, human hearts that stand still at the approach of death.

“Margery,” Professor Carter asked presently, “do you remember Immanuel's Land? Can you say it for me now?”

Margery's heart almost stood still at that request. Long ago, at Pine Clumps, Professor Carter had given her that poem, and she had committed it to memory, and often on their pleasant rides and walks repeated it to him. Could she say it now? Her lips trembled, but only for a moment; then, in a strength that was surely not her own, in a low but clear voice, she repeated,—

“ ‘ The sands of time are sinking,  
The dawn of heaven breaks;  
The summer morn I've sighed for,  
The fair sweet morn awakes;



*ALONG THE OLD ROAD.*

Dark, dark hath been the midnight,  
But day-spring is at hand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's Land.

“ ‘The King there, in his beauty  
Without a vail, is seen ;  
It were a well-spent journey,  
Though seven deaths lay between.  
The Lamb, with his fair army,  
Doth on Mount Zion stand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's Land.

“ ‘Oh ! Christ, he is the fountain,—  
The deep, sweet well of love !  
The streams on earth I've tasted,  
More deep I'll drink above ;  
There, to an ocean fulness  
His mercy doth expand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's Land.

“ ‘I've wrestled on toward heaven,  
'Gainst storm, and wind, and tide :  
Now like a weary traveler  
That leaneth on his guide,  
Amid the shades of evening,  
While sinks life's lingering sand,  
I hail the glory dawning  
From Immanuel's Land.

“ ‘With mercy and with judgment  
My web of time he wove ;  
And aye the dews of sorrow  
Were lusted with his love :  
I'll bless the hand that guided,  
I'll bless the heart that planned,  
When throned where glory dwelleth,  
In Immanuel's Land.' ”



Margery's voice was trembling a little now, and, for a second, she paused.

"Go on, please," Professor Carter said, feebly.

And, controlling herself by a strong effort once more, softly, but distinctly, she repeated,—

" 'Oh, I am my Beloved's,  
And my Beloved is mine !  
He brings a poor, vile sinner  
Into his "house of wine!"  
I stand upon his merit,  
I know no safer stand,  
Not e'en where glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

" 'I shall sleep sound in Jesus,  
Filled with his likeness rise,  
To live and to adore him,  
To see him with these eyes :  
'Tween me and resurrection  
But Paradise doth stand ;  
Then—then for glory dwelling,  
In Immanuel's land.

" 'The bride eyes not her garments,  
But her dear bridegroom's face,  
I will not gaze at glory,  
But on my King of Grace—  
Not at the crown he giveth,  
But on his pierced hand :  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Immanuel's Land.' "

There was a sorrowful break in Margery's voice now, and, as if conscious that the effort she was making was too hard for her, Professor Carter motioned her to stop.



“The Lamb—is all—the glory,” he whispered, while a beautiful smile lit up his pale face. “Yes, and I—shall see him soon—and then—I shall be—satisfied.”

His voice changed a little, and a sudden spasm, as of pain, contracted his face. It was but for a moment ; soon he looked up, and smiled brightly as ever on the tender faces that bent over him.

“Do not be troubled,” he said, soothingly,—as if, even in that supreme moment, mindful of them alone—“it is nothing to mind—it will soon be over. Margaret,”—and now his eyes sought his wife’s face, and never left it again,—“do you remember, dear—‘The pilgrim they laid—in a large open chamber—whose window opened toward—the sun-rising. The name of the chamber was—Peace. There he slept till—daybreak. Then he awoke and—began—to sing.’ Think of that day-break, dear ; think of the singing—*then*.”

And as if, with the thought of that singing, the longing to join in it grew too strong to be longer denied, he murmured once more,—

“The Lamb is all the glory.”

And then the gates were flung wide open, and through them the grand old pilgrim passed into the city, that had “no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”



## CHAPTER XX.

### STILL ALONG THE HIGHWAY.

And I slept, and dreamed again, and saw the same two pilgrims going down the mountains along the highway towards the city."—*Pilgrim's Progress*.

IT was the last night of Margery's visit; early the next morning she was to start for home, and, late in the afternoon, she stole, unnoticed, as she thought, from the house, and found her way to the sacred "God's-acre" where Professor Carter was peacefully resting. "God's-acre"—with a sweet, soothing power that name returned to her, while she stood looking, with moist eyes, at the flower-strewn grave that covered one who had been to her the truest of true friends; who had

"Allured to brighter worlds and led the way."

In "God's-acre" he was sleeping—no pain could ever reach him now—and in God's world she and all he loved were living. And as she remembered that, St. Paul's grand words came home to her with new meaning: "Whether we live,



therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." And, kneeling by that precious grave, Margery gave herself anew to the Lord, and consecrated to him all she had and was, and humbly prayed that he would make her Christ-like.

The sun was just setting as she knelt there; its golden light was falling through the tree-tops and brightening the marble slabs and moss-grown graves, and prophesying, in nature's mute, beautiful way, of the light that would one day illumine that quiet spot when the sunrise of the resurrection morn should dawn.

And "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him," she repeated; and, with the sunshine of that promise making both her heart and face bright, she looked up to find Mr. MacMillan waiting quietly beside her.

"It is growing damp. You must not stay here longer," he said. And, as she turned homeward with him, Margery asked her surprised question,—

"How did you know where I was?"

"Did you think you could run away and not be missed?" he said, with a smile. "I believe, during the last hour or two, I have heard 'Where's Margery?' at least a dozen times. And, as I seemed to be the only member of the household that could answer that question, I thought it wise to come and bring the truant home."



"But I don't see how you knew where to come?" Margery insisted.

"I saw you leave the house," he said, quietly, "and then, perhaps, sympathy was the magic thread by which I followed you."

"I wish I could always be followed by that thread," Margery answered, with a little sigh.

"Are you not?" The question was very simply and naturally asked, and Margery answered it in the same way,—

"Yes—here."

"But not in your own home?" he kindly questioned.

Margery hesitated a little. "I am sure of father's sympathy always—now," she said, in a moment; "but it seems as if I could not please mother, and Clifford and Laura."

"'Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God,'" Mr. MacMillan said, thoughtfully. "Dear Miss Margery, it is very sweet to have the approval of our friends and to know that we please them; but, as Christians, our aim must be higher than that—even to please God. And then the fulfillment of the promise will surely follow some day; 'when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.'"

"Do you think so?" she said, wishfully. And in a moment the deepest wish of her heart found



utterance. "If I could only know that mother and Clifford would surely be Christians some day, I believe I could bear everything."

He looked at the pure, lovely face she turned towards him, and almost involuntarily the low words escaped him. "I would not like to think of your bearing everything." But in the next breath he said, quietly as ever,—

"You know that Christ died for them, Miss Margery; and you know, too, that no true prayer goes up to him, that he does not stoop to hear."

'Not one that was really earnest  
Ever has lost its way,  
And none that asked for a blessing  
Ever was answered nay.'

"There you must rest. God sometimes tests our faith—not by denying, but only by, for a time, withholding the good we ask of him. He is never impatient of long delays, and the children who love and trust him must be willing to wait patiently his hour."

"I think I am willing," Margery said, humbly; "only, sometimes, I feel very anxious."

"I know," he said, very kindly. "I know well what those anxious times are. But when they come, Miss Margery, say to yourself, 'God's will is full of love—God's time is always best.' And then tell all your care to him, and, without worrying or fretting, leave it with him."



They were near home now, and walked along in silence until they reached the gate; but just as he opened it Mr. MacMillan rather abruptly asked,—

“Will you give me your father’s business address, Miss Margery? I have a little private affair of my own that I wish to consult him about.”

With the frank simplicity of a child, she complied with his request, and then entered the house, and for the remainder of the evening devoted herself to Mrs. Carter. There was much to be talked about, and many last plans and arrangements to be made; for in Professor Carter’s childless home—as in how many others?—the going out of the husband meant, but too truly, the sundering of the house-band.

Mr. Trinot had decided not to go to China, but to reside in New York; and already he and Mrs. Trinot were busily engaged with their preparations for housekeeping. It was not advisable for Mrs. Carter to remain in her old home alone, and it was decided that for the present, at least, she should live with Mrs. MacMillan, and rent the pleasant house that had given them all so many cordial welcomes; and Margery sighed, as she thought that when she left it, the next day, it would in all human probability, be for the last time.

“Never mind,” Mrs. MacMillan said, encourag-



ingly, as she moved about Margery's room, and helped her in her packing; "you know you are coming to see us soon in Bellefield. You must not forget that you have promised to come, some time, and hear Archibald preach."

"No, I shall not forget," Margery rather dolefully answered; "but father writes that mother and he are very lonely, now that Clifford and Laura have gone to housekeeping, and that he doesn't think he can ever spare me again; so I am afraid it will be a long time before I see you and Bellefield."

"Perhaps Archibald can manage it," Mrs. Carter said, as quietly as if she were suggesting the possibility of his managing Margery's trunk, that seemed inclined to resist all her and Mrs. MacMillan's efforts to lock it.

"He can do almost everything, I know," Margery said, as, with a determined spring on its top, she sent the hasp of the trunk into its place; "but I don't know about this. However," she promised, "when the way opens I will surely come, dear Mrs. MacMillan." And with that promise her friends were forced to be content.

Margery had been home but a few days, when one morning, as Mr. Hamilton sat alone in his office examining his numerous business letters and papers, he found among them one that seemed to be of unusual interest.



Slowly, with great care, he read and re-read it, and then, spreading it before him on his desk, he sat a long time looking at it with serious and rather melancholy eyes.

“Hum!” he muttered at last, as, with an almost impatient gesture, he folded the important epistle and thrust it into his pocket. “Hum!—

‘Thus it is our daughters leave us,  
Those we love, and those who love us!  
Just as they have learned to help us,  
When we are old and lean upon them.’”

He stopped and passed his hand almost roughly across his eyes, where something very like a mist seemed to be gathering. “Pshaw!” he said, scornfully; “I wonder if I am growing sentimental in my old age. I am a business man, and I suppose I ought to take a business view of this case, as well as of every other. But to give up my little Margery—Well, I could not expect my bird to stay always in the old nest. And I suppose I ought to be proud and glad to give her into hands as strong and safe as these that are asking for her now. But I’ll take my own time about giving her,” he decided, with a wise nod of his head; “and before I let this young man come to plead his cause I’ll make sure that his doing so will really add to the child’s happiness. If the blind god—who is always making mischief somewhere—hasn’t actually hit her with an arrow yet, I’ll



keep her far beyond his reach for some time to come." And having thus satisfactorily settled on his course of action, Mr. Hamilton, with what heart and interest he could, turned to his business duties.

"Margery," he said, that evening, as, while resting in his easy-chair, he watched his daughter as she sat opposite him with her lap full of soft, bright wools. "Margery, you haven't had time to tell me much about your visit yet. I know you enjoyed it; but after all, didn't you sometimes find it very lonely?"

"Lonely!" and Margery's face and voice were both alike full of surprise at the bare suggestion of such a possibility. "Why, father, I did not have one lonely moment. It was the happiest visit—but one—that I ever made."

"Ah! indeed. And what was that other visit?"

"Why, the one I made Miss Woodward at Bellefield the Christmas Clifford was sick. Don't you remember, father?"

"Pretty well," Mr. Hamilton said, dryly; while the rather unnecessary kick he bestowed just then on his "foot-rest" seemed to say—"only too well." "Let me see. Mrs. MacMillan lives in Bellefield, I believe, and you visited her then, too, didn't you?"

"Yes," Margery very quietly answered.

"And this summer Mrs. MacMillan and her



son have been at Mrs. Carter's. Now, I saw Professor Carter and his wife and Miss Woodward the morning they met you at the station; but I have never seen the MacMillans. What are they like, Margery? Give me a good portrait of them, can't you?"

Margery sat still a moment, looking with intent eyes on the carpet, as if the pleasant faces her father wished described were smiling at her from it.

"What is Mrs. MacMillan like, father?" she said, thoughtfully. "I think she is like what we mean when we talk of rest; for just to be with her seems to soothe and strengthen you. And she is a woman who never worries, father; and so, wherever she goes, she carries sunshine with her."

"Humph!" Mr. Hamilton ejaculated; "a woman who never worries, is she? I would quite like to make her acquaintance. I have seen a great many women in my life, but one 'who never worries' has never yet come within my field of vision. Well, go on, Margery; your portrait-painting is very effective. What is her son like?"

Margery shook her head at that question. "I cannot describe him, father," she said, gravely.

"Why not? Because there is nothing in him worthy of description?"

"Why, father!" And this time there was a note of indignation in Margery's sweet voice, that



at once amused and vexed her father. "I think he is the noblest man I ever knew."

"Present company ought to be much obliged to you," Mr. Hamilton said; but his voice was playful and Margery little suspected the pain his laughing words concealed. "Well," he began again in a moment, "I should suppose this paragon of nobility would be getting married, Margery; isn't he engaged yet?"

What was there in that matter-of-fact question, that was asked with so much apparent carelessness, to make Margery feel uncomfortable and almost unhappy? Perhaps if a reason had been demanded, she could not have given it; but Mr. Hamilton well knew that her voice was changed, as she answered, "I do not know."

"Well, don't you, at least, hope he is?" Mr. Hamilton mercilessly continued; "wouldn't you like to know his wife?"

"I don't know," Margery stammered; and, rising hurriedly, she murmured something about "going to find mother," and escaped from the room.

With eyes at once laughing and troubled Mr. Hamilton looked after her; but whatever he thought of the information he had gained, he was, at least, compelled to own that his inquisitorial examination had been a great success.

"Ah! sits the wind in that quarter?" he mut-



tered, rather gloomily. "Well, I've nothing to gain by waiting, that's evident, and I'll write that letter to-morrow." And for long hours after reaching that decision Mr. Hamilton remained where Margery left him, while visions, at once sad and pleasant, of the coming years passed in rapid succession before him.

It was early in July now, and in a few days Mrs. Hamilton, with Clifford, and Laura, started for one of the fashionable summer resorts, and Margery, to her great delight, was left at home with her father.

"Don't you think me a pretty good housekeeper, father?" she asked, gayly, one morning at breakfast, as she gave her father what was, he declared, the perfection of a cup of coffee.

"Almost too good," Mr. Hamilton answered, with a smile that, in spite of his effort to be cheerful, ended in a sigh. "We never have a very superior article, of any kind, in our possession, Margery, that somebody does not covet it, and try to coax or steal it from us."

Margery laughed very contentedly. "There is no danger, father, this 'superior article' will neither be coaxed nor stolen from you," she promised.

"Think not? Well, my dear, I hope you will prove a true prophetess. And, by the way,"—Mr. Hamilton proceeded, carelessly, as if the subject



was not one that had cost him a sleepless night—"there is a little matter I must not forget to mention. I expect to bring a friend home with me this afternoon. So order a good dinner, little girl, and have everything bright and pleasant." And, with a kiss that was even fonder than usual, Mr. Hamilton went off to his office.

With all the care and painstaking of a new and anxious housekeeper, Margery made her preparations for her father's guest, and when all was satisfactorily arranged, in the early summer afternoon, she went into the library to while away, among her favorite books, the two or three hours before her father would probably return.

Presently, while in the very luxury of repose, she sat curled up in an easy chair reading, with flushed cheeks and kindling eyes, Browning's wonderful letter from "Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs," she heard the door-bell ring.

She stirred a little impatiently. "Oh, dear, I do hope that is no one to call on me," she thought, rather inhospitably. The next moment a servant opened the library door, and Margery looked up to see Mr. MacMillan standing on the threshold.

Sometimes it is pleasant to have our hopes disappointed. And, if the beautiful color that suddenly overspread Margery's face could be believed, it was certainly pleasant for her to be disappointed now.



"Have I taken you very much by surprise?" Mr. MacMillan asked, in his usual quiet manner. "Mr. Hamilton requested me to precede him, as he thought it probable he would be detained later than usual by his business to-night."

Even while Margery's answer was glad and cordial as possible, she still looked a little perplexed.

"Father told me, this morning, he expected to bring a friend home with him to-night," she said; "but——"

"But you did not expect to see me," Mr. MacMillan laughingly interrupted. "I hope I may claim to be that friend, Miss Margery; will you not receive me as such?"

"But this," Margery soberly explained, "was father's friend."

"And, pray, is there any serious objection to my being your father's friend?" Mr. MacMillan playfully asked.

"Oh, no," Margery said, in some confusion; "I am very glad if you are; but—I did not know that you knew him."

"I know him a little," Mr. MacMillan gravely answered. "I have had a long conversation with him to-day, and hope soon to know him better. But—Miss Margery, the fulfillment of that hope depends—entirely—upon—you."

"Upon me?" Margery faltered.



“Upon you—alone. If I am ever to know your father better and claim him as my—friend, it will only be because his daughter gives me the right to claim her as my own. Will she?”

There was a sweet, tremulous silence for a few moments in that beautiful room, and then, in the glad confidence that the friend who asked that right would never wish to turn her aside from the “King’s highway,” Margery granted his request.

Great was Mrs. Hamilton’s, and Clifford’s, and Laura’s consternation when letters from Mr. Hamilton and Margery told them of the approaching change in their family. If it had been possible, they would certainly have prevented it; but with her father on her side, Margery was safe, and, yielding to the inevitable, they gradually withdrew their opposition.

“It might have been worse,” they—in a make-the-best-of-a-misfortune spirit—remarked. But years after, when still unsatisfied with this world’s pleasures they were willing, at last, to learn the lessons God would teach them; and then Margery’s prayers for them were answered.

And now let us take one more look at Margery, before we leave her still walking onward, in the sunshine of a faith ever growing brighter, along the old road whose end is heaven.

It was Christmas night again, four years since the glad Christmas night when Margery played



blind-man's-buff, and caught Mr. MacMillan, and made him, as he playfully says, her captive forever. And once more Mrs. MacMillan's house had been brilliantly lighted, and Christmas fires had burned brightly on the ample hearths. There had been a large and happy gathering in the hospitable old house during the evening; it was late now; and Margery MacMillan stood alone in the library, looking with thoughtful but happy eyes at the glowing heap of coals and embers, whose red light still played brightly over her face and dress.

The door opened soon, and with a quick step Mr. MacMillan came to her side.

"Seeing pictures in the coals?" he said gently; "what are they, Margery?"

She smiled a little as she answered, "A panorama of Pilgrim's Progress, I think, Archibald."

"With you and me for the pilgrims?" Mr. MacMillan asked, playfully. "Well, Margery, where are we now?"

"I am not sure," she answered, in a rather sober voice.

He watched her for a moment and then he asked, "Do you remember the Delectable Mountains, where Christian and Hopeful 'went forth and walked awhile, having a pleasant prospect on every side?' are we not there, Margery? I would fain believe so."



"Yes, I thought of those mountains," Margery owned, with a smile that was full of sunshine; "but they were not the end of the pilgrim's journey, Archie, and as I look onward and think of all the steps yet to be taken, I cannot help feeling a little afraid."

"Then do not look onward; look upward," he tenderly counseled. "Margery," he added soon, "there is one glad, sure answer for all your fears. Along the 'King's highway' the Master goes before his own; and if, with steps that turn not to the right hand nor to the left, we follow him, he will not fail to guide us safely past all the dangers we are yet to meet."

"And then?" Margery softly whispered, as he paused.

"And then?" he thoughtfully echoed. "Ah! my little pilgrim, I cannot answer that question now. We must wait until we, too, come to the end of the old road, and, like Bunyan's grand pilgrims, 'go up and follow one another in at the beautiful gate of the city.' And then—in a truer, gladder sense than we can understand here, where all is changing—we shall know the blessedness of being forever at home."

THE END.

656























LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022030371

